TUESDAY FEBRUARY 26, 2019

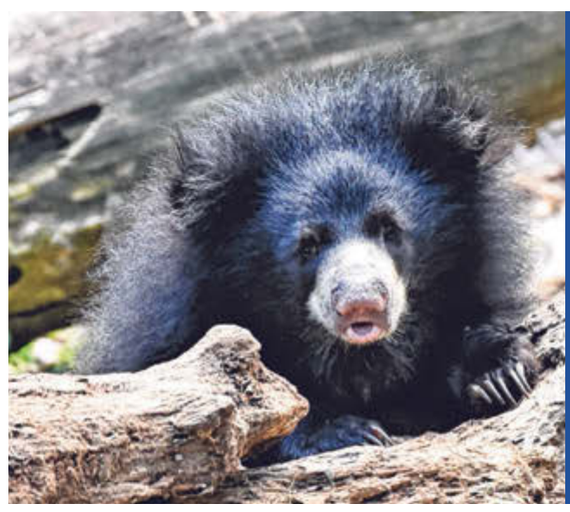
SINCE 1845

THE STRAITS TIMES

World
Rise and fall of ISIS A12&13

Life
Art of spotting fakes
D3

Sport
J-League coach for Lions?
C9



Home
Baby boom at wildlife parks
B1

Optimism over trade deal as US delays tariff hike

Markets in Asia close higher; US-China trade talks now focused on how to enforce deal

Charissa Yong
In Washington
and Chong Koh Ping
In Shanghai

The United States will delay a tariff hike on US$200 billion (S$270 billion) worth of Chinese goods which was scheduled to take effect this weekend, giving negotiators more time to resolve the trade dispute that has unsettled markets worldwide for months.

The talks are now said to be centred on how any potential deal is to be enforced.

If all goes well, there will be "very big news over the next week or so", US President Donald Trump told state governors on Sunday night, hours after he announced that the tariff hike would be pushed back to an unspecified date.

Chinese stocks posted their biggest single-day gains in more than three years yesterday, buoyed by expectations that a trade deal between the world's two largest economies would be reached soon.

US stocks opened higher yesterday after the latest developments. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 94.34 points, or 0.36 per cent, at the open to 26,126.15. The S&P 500 opened higher by 11.68 points, or 0.42 per cent, at 2,804.35.

Shanghai surged nearly 6 per cent, while Shenzhen added more than 5 per cent. Elsewhere in Asia, markets mostly closed in positive territory, with Hong Kong adding 0.5 per cent, Tokyo rising 0.48 per cent and Taiwan advancing 0.66 per cent. However, Singapore and Seoul ended mostly flat for the day, with analysts saying that the markets had already priced in the positive news earlier.

The US and Chinese negotiating teams, which extended their discussions into the weekend after reaching a currency stabilisation deal, wrapped up talks on Sunday.

Mr Trump wrote on Twitter that they made substantial progress on important structural issues including intellectual property protection, technology transfer, agriculture, services and currency. He added that should both sides make additional progress, a summit between him and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida would be in the works.

Mr Trump said that they "still have a little ways to go", while analysts warned that the delay in the tariff hike did not definitively mean a deal had been sealed. The planned hike from 10 per cent to 25 per cent was due to take effect at the stroke of midnight on Friday.

Reuters reported that the enforcement of any such deal was the latest sticking point.

Ensuring the Chinese comply with their commitments to reform has long been a top concern of Washington's, but Beijing has been more lukewarm on enforcement mechanisms, calling instead for a fair and objective process.

Like Mr Trump, Chinese news agency Xinhua said yesterday that the US and China made substantial progress in negotiations. The delegations "came a step closer to realising the important consensus reached" by Mr Trump and Mr Xi in December, when they agreed to a 90-day truce in their trade war, said Xinhua.

Analysts said that though the trade war may end soon, the new phase of US-China relations – marked by tensions and an open regard of each other as strategic competitors – would not.

"We can expect more differences between the two countries on strategic issues such as the South China Sea and Taiwan," said Sino-US expert Shi Yinhong of Renmin University.

"After some time, Mr Trump is likely to restart the trade war to extract more concessions from China," said Professor Shi.

"In the next three, five to 10 years, Sino-US bilateral ties will become even worse," he predicted.

charyong@sph.com.sg
kohping@sph.com.sg

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6

Spike Lee leaps for joy at Oscar win

An exhilarated Spike Lee accepting the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for biographical crime film BlacKkKlansman from actor Samuel L. Jackson. This is the American film-maker's first competitive Oscar win after five nominations over almost 30 years. There were other surprises in store at Hollywood's biggest awards night on Sunday, including Olivia Colman's win for Best Actress over veteran Glenn Close and biopic Bohemian Rhapsody walking away with the most number of awards. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SEE LIFE D1-3

Arrests of drug abusers up by 11% last year

A total of 3,438 drug abusers were arrested in Singapore last year, an 11 per cent increase from 2017.

The rise was due to a spike in abusers of new psychoactive substances and methamphetamine here, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) said in its annual report yesterday. Drugs with an estimated street value of $6.65 million were seized last year.

About 40 per cent of drug abusers nabbed were first-timers, of whom almost two-thirds were under 30.

The number of abusers arrested rose across all ethnic groups. Malays made up the highest portion, with 1,760 arrests.

CNB director Ng Ser Song called the global drug situation "worrying", noting the rising levels of methamphetamine production.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4

Possible end to Korean War at summit: South

The second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un in Hanoi this week holds little promise for a final deal on ridding North Korea of nuclear weapons, but may yield an official end to the Korean War.

Speaking on Sunday in Washington, Mr Trump referred to his "very, very good relationship" with Mr Kim. But he played down expectations of a major breakthrough in the North's denuclearisation or of sanctions relief for Pyongyang, saying that he would be happy as long as North Korea maintained its pause on weapons testing.

But the two leaders might declare a formal end to the 1950 to 1953 Korean War during their summit this week, South Korea said yesterday.

A peace declaration would be the first step towards a treaty to replace the ceasefire among the US-led United Nations forces, North Korea and China.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A8

68 PAGES IN FIVE PARTS
$1.10
To subscribe: 6388-3838
sphsubscription.com.sg
sph A Singapore Press Holdings publication
MCI (P) 069/01/2019★★

10 must-reads for today

1 Revolt a distant memory
The 33rd anniversary of the Philippines' "People Power" revolt was marked with a ceremony in Manila yesterday, but the celebratory fervour that swept the country when its citizens toppled dictator Ferdinand Marcos from power in 1986 has faded since. Fewer than 2,000 people attended yesterday's confetti-showering event at the People Power monument. WORLD A11

Confetti being showered on the People Power monument to commemorate the 33rd anniversary of the revolt yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

2 Tariff hikes pushed back
The March 1 deadline for tariff hikes on US$200 billion (S$270 billion) worth of Chinese goods has been pushed back to an unspecified date, after negotiators from the United States and China made substantial progress in talks to resolve the two countries' unsettling trade war. TOP OF THE NEWS A1

3 Budget debate begins
Getting the workforce to be more "future-proof" amid technological and economic disruptions will be a key focus for MPs when the debate on this year's Budget begins today. Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat will respond to MPs' concerns on Thursday, after which Parliament will form the Committee of Supply to scrutinise and debate the various ministries' budgets and policies. TOP OF THE NEWS A4

4 PKR stands by Mahathir
Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's Parti Keadilan Rakyat has publicly affirmed its support for Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad amid rumours of a planned no-confidence vote against the Premier. The party's declaration, however, came with a subtle reminder that the elder statesman had agreed to hand over the reins to Mr Anwar after two years. WORLD A9

5 Early Crazy Rich Asians
Long before the movie Crazy Rich Asians was made and before Europeans came to Singapore, Asians were making the island a hub for trade, money and ideas. Examples include Teochew rice merchants and Chettiar moneylenders, says historian Tan Tai Yong. OPINION A15

6 Ethics class to go online
A mandatory ethics class which accredited Islamic religious teachers must attend can soon be accessed online. This is part of a new initiative to ensure that all will fulfil the requirement by 2020 or risk being struck off. HOME B3

7 Mum failed to report abuse
A 40-year-old divorcee was jailed for six months for intentionally failing to alert the police that her married boyfriend was raping her young daughter. The man sexually abused the child from 2010 to 2016, and his offences came to light only when the girl told his wife about her ordeal. HOME B7

8 Lower inflation forecast
Lower oil prices have prompted officials to lower their headline inflation forecast for the year. This comes as overall inflation in January eased to 0.4 per cent, compared with the same month in 2018. BUSINESS C1

9 Chelsea feeling more blue
Chelsea's imploding season has gotten worse, not because they lost the English League Cup on penalties to Manchester City on Sunday, but owing to a bizarre row over manager Maurizio Sarri's failed bid to replace goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga (right) ahead of the shoot-out. SPORT C10

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

10 New art walk experiences
For the latest edition of the OH! Open House series of art walks, instead of taking visitors on an art hop around a neighbourhood, Passport, from March 16 to 31, will offer six art experiences spread around different locations. LIFE D4

Straits Times Digital

REACH US AT
Website: **www.straitstimes.com**
Facebook: **www.fb.com/thestraitstimes**
Twitter: **@STcom**
Instagram: **@Straits_Times**
Also follow us on **Telegram**

VIDEO
A mother's sorrow
Ms Elaine Lek shares about losing her teenage son, Zen Dylan Koh, to suicide and how she deals with the tragedy and pain.
http://str.sg/sorrow

PODCAST
All about the Oscars
We dive deep into what actually goes on behind winning an Oscar, the make-up of Oscar voters and how they can skip watching nominated films or have existing biases, as well as famous upsets at the awards.
http://str.sg/oscars2019

Buy Direct from Australian Developer!

MELBOURNE PROPERTY EXPO

IN SINGAPORE
This Thursday to Sunday
Feb 28 - Mar 3 • 10am to 7pm
Conrad Centennial Hotel, 2 Temasek Blvd

✔ APPROVED FOR OVERSEAS BUYERS ✔ FREEHOLD TITLE

Artist's impressions

NEW APARTMENT RELEASE!
"LONSDALE COLLECTION"

MELBOURNE GRAND APARTMENTS - 1, 2 & 3 BEDS FROM A$489,000*

PRIME CITY CENTRE LOCATION
Walk to Queen Victoria Market, Flagstaff Gardens, Bourke St Mall, Southern Cross Station, cafés & trams.
Easy access to Melbourne University & RMIT.

Exclusive residents' facilities: Indoor heated pool, gym, sauna, yoga room, banquet room, theatre, coffee lounge, residents' lounge & dining, outdoor terrace with BBQ, 24/7 concierge & more.

Studying in Melbourne in 2019? Limited number of new apartments close to major universities completing soon - For sale and rent!

PLUS: FREE 45-MINUTE MELBOURNE PROPERTY INFO SESSIONS
Hear what is happening in the Melbourne property market
- How foreigners can purchase Melbourne freehold property, pre-approved by the Australian Govt.
- Why so many international students choose to live and study in Melbourne.
- How to buy with just 10% initial deposit and fixed price contract.
- Learn about 'One-stop-shop' property management services.

Up to 3 Sessions Daily • Limited Seats • Book Now!

Singapore Hotline: 6835 0778 australianpropertyshow.com

Singapore Office: #05-02 Raffles City Tower, 250 North Bridge Rd, Singapore
DISCLAIMER: This is an overseas investment. As overseas investments carry additional financial, regulatory and legal risks, investors are advised to do the necessary checks and research on the investment beforehand. Planning permit: 201532884.
*Prices as at 20/2/2019 until sold.

CENTRAL EQUITY
OVER 75 PROJECTS DELIVERED AS PROMISED
30+ YEARS SINCE 1987

PLUS: New Melbourne Landed Properties from A$468,000*

Harness your power
Sentosa Golf Club, Singapore
28 Feb – 3 Mar 2019
hsbcgolf.com/womens
HSBC Women's
World Championship
Together we thrive
Issued by The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, which is incorporated in the Hong Kong SAR with limited liability.

Help for workers a key focus for Budget debate beginning today

Rachel Au-Yong
Political Correspondent

Getting the Singaporean workforce to be more "future-proof" amid technological and economic disruptions will be a key focus for MPs when the debate on this year's Budget begins today.

Mr Liang Eng Hwa (Holland-Bukit Timah GRC) told The Straits Times he was glad the Career Support Programme – which provides wage support for employers to hire eligible Singaporeans who are mature and have been retrenched or are in long-term unemployment – was extended for another two years. But he wants it to be permanent.

"We can expect more disruptions in the years ahead and, with these, more workers who will be displaced," said Mr Liang who, as chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee (GPC) for Finance and Trade and Industry, will kick off the debate. "It is not a good feeling for someone who has lost his job to have to switch careers – this scheme gives the assurance that we are there to help," he said.

Labour MP Patrick Tay (West Coast GRC) wants to know how mature professionals, managers and executives – most at risk of retrenchment – can learn new skills, before they lose their jobs, to make the switch to new careers more easily.

"We need to have more pre-emptive and pro-active training to help this vulnerable group," said Mr Tay, who chairs the Manpower GPC.

One area he is interested in is how paralegals and legal secretaries can pick up skills to keep themselves relevant in the law industry, which is set for change.

Mr Zainal Sapari (Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC) will focus on low-wage workers and how everyone has a part to play in uplifting them.

For example, service buyers should adopt an outcome-based contracting model, where they look at quality aspects, not just price. Likewise, service providers should avoid undercutting.

"When you compete on price, the workers bear the brunt of that cost," he said.

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat will respond to MPs' concerns over the Budget on Thursday, after which Parliament will form the Committee of Supply to scrutinise and debate the various ministries' budgets and policies.

Key measures announced in the Budget last week include the Merdeka Generation Package, the $1.1 billion Bicentennial Bonus for Singaporeans and a reduction in the foreign worker quota for the service sector.

Dr Chia Shi-Lu (Tanjong Pagar GRC) will drill down into the details on the enhanced Community Health Assist Scheme, which will see bigger subsidies and also be extended to cover those with chronic conditions.

Dr Lily Neo (Jalan Besar GRC), who has about 30 rental blocks in her ward, wants a more holistic and targeted approach to help the low income and reduce inequality.

"In the past, most children, no matter their situation, could eventually 'make it'. Now, it is getting harder – disadvantaged children have greater challenges to reach the same status as their peers," she said.

The sitting will end on March 8.

rachelay@sph.com.sg

Surge in abusers of new psychoactive substances

They push up overall arrest rate of drug abusers; increase result of enforcement efforts, enhanced detection: CNB

Fabian Koh

A surge in the number of abusers of new psychoactive substances (NPS) drove up the overall arrest rate for drug abusers here last year.

A total of 343 NPS abusers were nabbed, compared with just one the year before, the Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) said yesterday in its annual report.

NPS overtook heroin as the third most commonly abused drug among first-time abusers and, similarly, overtook cannabis as the third most commonly abused drug among all users.

The amount of drugs seized last year was estimated to have a total street value of about $6.65 million, a slight increase from about $6.63 million the year before.

NPS produces similar effects as controlled drugs such as cannabis, cocaine, Ecstasy, methamphetamine or heroin. In May last year, 25 NPS were listed as Class A controlled drugs, punishable under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Methamphetamine was the drug of choice for most new abusers in Singapore last year, with cannabis in second place. Methamphetamine and heroin were the top two drugs for all users, comprising 62 per cent and 20 per cent of those arrested, respectively.

Among offenders, 478 – or 14 per cent – of them abused more than one type of drug.

"In particular, the increase in NPS abusers was a result of sustained enforcement efforts targeting NPS abuse and enhancements in detection capabilities," CNB said.

CNB director Ng Ser Song has described the global and regional drug situation as "worrying".

He noted that the production and trafficking of methamphetamine had reached "alarming levels", and that the market for NPS was continuing to evolve.

"There is also a push in some countries for alternative, liberal drug policies," he said.

Data from last year's United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime World Drug Report showed that South-east Asia is one of the world's largest methamphetamine markets, and the second largest opium and heroin market.

Close proximity to such large-scale drug production regions places Singapore at a high risk of being a target for drug trafficking syndicates, CNB said.

Against this challenging backdrop, Mr Ng said the CNB mounted intensive enforcement operations last year and dismantled 26 drug syndicates.

Together with the police and Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, the agency conducted 19 island-wide operations targeting drug traffickers and abusers and 1,575 operations to foil drug smuggling attempts at the checkpoints.

Given the transnational nature of drug trafficking, cross-border collaborations remained crucial in tackling the issue.

Last year, the CNB conducted 19 joint operations with its international counterparts.

fabkoh@sph.com.sg

The Drug Rehabilitation Centre in Upper Changi Road North. A total of 343 abusers of new psychoactive substances were nabbed, compared with just one the year before, the Central Narcotics Bureau said yesterday in its annual report.
ST FILE PHOTO

CNB concerned over more young and first-time offenders

About 40 per cent of drug abusers arrested in Singapore last year were first-time offenders, and nearly two-thirds of them were under the age of 30.

The numbers were singled out as an area of concern by Central Narcotics Bureau (CNB) director Ng Ser Song as the agency released its annual report yesterday.

CNB said it arrested 3,438 drug abusers last year, an 11 per cent increase from 3,091 in 2017. Those between the ages of 20 and 29 continued to form the largest portion of abusers, with 1,010 of those arrested making up this group.

The number of repeat offenders also increased by 12 per cent to 2,072 last year. They numbered 1,842 in 2017.

The number of first-time drug abusers nabbed rose to 1,366, a 9 per cent increase from 1,249 the year before. Of those arrested, 64 per cent were under 30 years old.

The number of those arrested increased across all ethnic groups, with the majority, or 1,760, of them being Malay.

The Chinese followed, with 974 arrested last year.

Indian abusers, along with those from the "others" category, saw the biggest jump in the rate of arrests, with the number surging by 31 per cent for both groups.

Malays also made up the biggest group among new abusers arrested, with 673 arrested.

CNB has been running the "*Dadah itu Haram*" ("Drugs are Forbidden") campaign since April 2017 to tackle the issue of an over-representation of Malays among drug abusers. A seven-person "*Dadah itu Haram*" secretariat has been working with Malay-Muslim organisations such as the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore and Mendaki to tackle the issue in the community.

Mr Ng said that CNB continued with its preventive drug education efforts last year, which he called the "first line of defence against demand for drugs". The agency has worked with various groups in the community to boost awareness of the harm from drugs and counter misinformation about drugs, through social media campaigns and outreach programmes.

"On the Government's part, we continuously review our approach to ensure that it keeps pace with the evolving drug landscape," Mr Ng said.

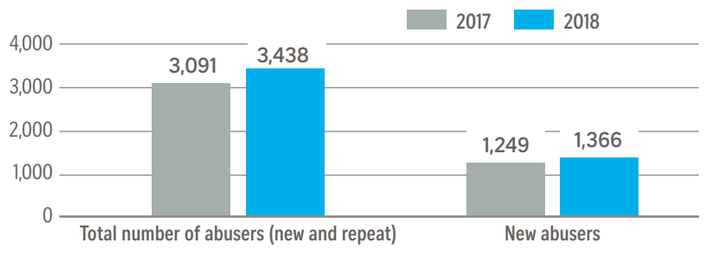
He cited the amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act, which were passed in Parliament last month. The changes criminalise acts which facilitate or promote drug use, and acts of endangerment, such as exposing a child to drugs or drug paraphernalia, or permitting a young person to abuse drugs.

Offenders who only abuse drugs, without committing other offences, will also be given a chance at rehabilitation to help them break the cycle of addiction and reintegrate into society.

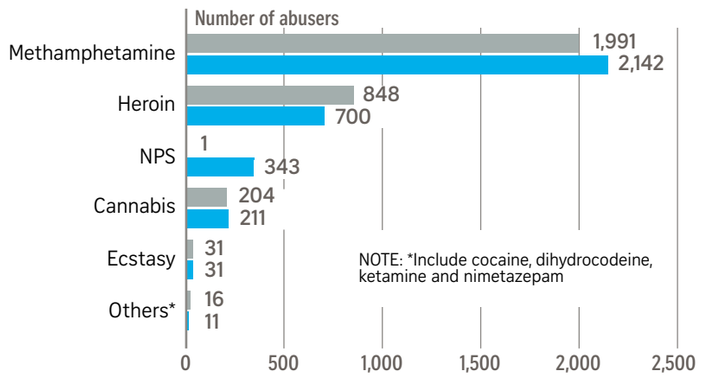
Fabian Koh

Drug abuse

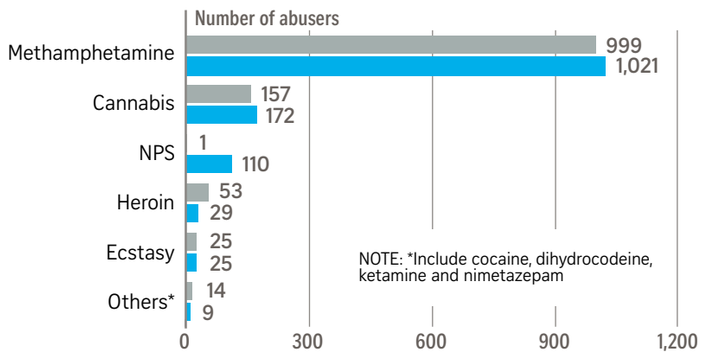
Overall situation in 2018



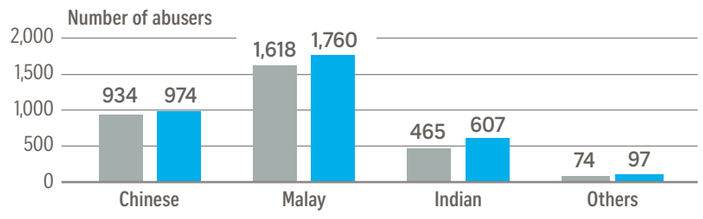
Total abusers by drug type



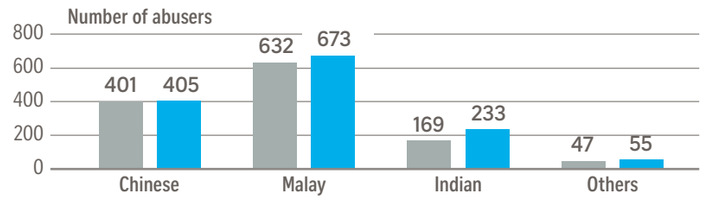
Total new abusers by drug type



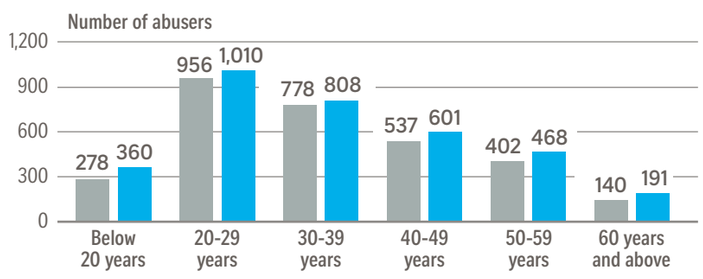
Total abusers by ethnic group



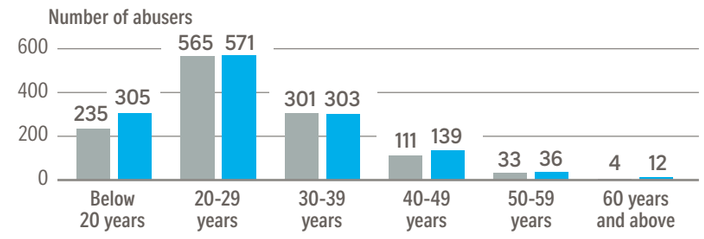
New abusers by ethnic group



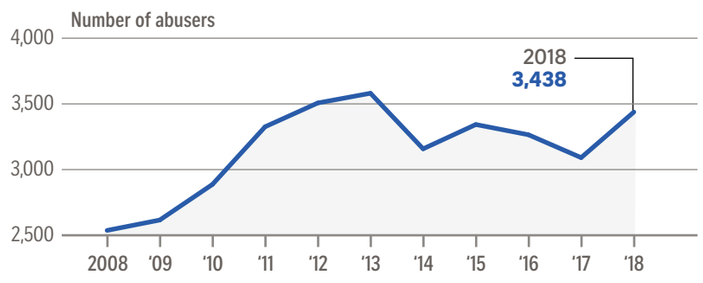
Total abusers arrested by age



New abusers arrested by age



Abusers arrested annually



Source: CENTRAL NARCOTICS BUREAU STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

SPC

KEEPS GETTING BETTER

Announcing Our Newest Milestone At Sumang (Punggol Town)

SPC's newest Service Station brings to motorists an enhanced experience and reaffirms our commitment to network expansion. Expect a new level of energy and convenience every time you drive in.

SPC Celebrating 55 YEARS Keeps getting better

Scan for location

www.spc.com.sg

United States President Donald Trump (centre) and First Lady Melania Trump (far right) at the Governors' Ball in the White House on Sunday. Mr Trump had announced that the tariff hike on US$200 billion (S$270 billion) worth of Chinese goods, scheduled to take effect this weekend, would be pushed back to an unspecified date. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Trade war truce extension offers hope for US-China deal: Analysts

They say outcome was expected as it is in both countries' interest; China likely to have made biggest concessions

Chong Koh Ping
China Correspondent
In Shanghai

The extension of the US-China trade war truce beyond March 1 points to a higher chance of a deal between the world's two largest economies, which is good news for China as well as the global economy, analysts say.

Most observers expected this outcome as it is in the interest of both countries to strike a deal to avert any further escalation in tensions.

China is likely to have made the biggest possible concessions for negotiations to come to this point.

"The tariff hike from 10 per cent to 25 per cent will hit the Chinese economy severely," said Dr Shen Jianguang, chief economist at JD Digits, a Chinese fintech group.

"Already, the goods affected by the first round of tariffs have seen export growth plummeting from 50 per cent to zero recently."

China is willing to pay a high price in exchange for stability in trade ties, he added.

Mr Louis Kuijs, head of Asia economics at Oxford Economics, a Hong Kong-based consulting firm, said this latest development "should be a positive for international trade and business in both countries, as well as the global economy more generally".

"It reduces some of the uncertainty that has been hanging over international trade and investment and seems to further confirm that, in the end, in such international conflicts, the Trump administration seems to strive for deals rather than escalation," he said.

That said, uncertainties still remain as there are no details emerging from this seventh round of trade talks.

According to media reports citing unnamed sources, China has pledged to buy up to US$1.2 trillion (S$1.6 trillion) worth of American goods, including corn and an additional 10 million metric tonnes of soya beans.

China will also keep the value of the yuan stable so that Beijing cannot resort to devaluing its currency to improve the competitiveness of its exports to counter the US tariffs.

Dr Shen observed that these issues are low-lying fruits that China can easily concede.

But he said there is very likely to be a compromise between the two countries on structural issues such as the removal of unfair subsidies for state-owned enterprises.

Agreeing, Professor Shi Yinhong of Renmin University in Beijing said China's strategy is to concede as much as possible on areas like increasing imports and opening of markets so as to lift pressures on other demands such as intellectual property rights protection and state subsidies, as well as the "verification and enforcement" mechanisms required by the United States.

OCBC economist Tommy Xie noted that the increased chance of a trade deal eases a key external risk for China.

It bodes well for market sentiments in the near term. However, medium-term prospects still remain murky due to disagreement between both countries on structural reforms and how the deal could be enforced.

He said it has been reported that the Americans have demanded the Chinese notify the US when and why they are intervening with the yuan.

While such a currency pact supports the yuan in the near term, it evokes the memory of the Plaza Accord, he said.

In 1985, the Japanese yen was made to appreciate significantly against the US dollar to help make American exports cheaper, but in the end it created a decades-long recession in Japan.

"Hopefully, the yuan does not appreciate for the wrong reasons," added Mr Xie.

To some analysts, the real good news in both countries reaching a trade deal is the impetus for China to deepen its market reforms.

This will go a longer way to help lift the Chinese economy than the short-term euphoria of a trade truce.

According to media reports citing unnamed sources, China has pledged to buy up to US$1.2 trillion (S$1.6 trillion) worth of American goods, including corn and an additional 10 million metric tonnes of soya beans. China will also keep the value of the yuan stable so that Beijing cannot resort to devaluing its currency to improve the competitiveness of its exports to counter the US tariffs.

With wider opening of markets and stronger protection of intellectual property rights, China could attract more foreign investments, said Dr Shen.

Addressing the issue of subsidies for state-owned enterprises will also benefit the private companies in China.

"Overall, it will be a plus for the Chinese economy if it adopts more market-based, law-based and internationalised practices," he added.

kohping@sph.com.sg

Shanghai leads Asian market rally as US delays China tariffs

HONG KONG • Shanghai surged more than 5 per cent yesterday, leading a rally across Asian markets after United States President Donald Trump said he would delay a hike in tariffs on Chinese goods, citing "substantial progress" in trade talks and fuelling hopes of an end to the long-running stand-off.

Optimism over the talks had already provided support to global equities, spurring a rally last month and this month, but Mr Trump's comments gave extra ammunition to investors to ramp up buying.

The news also fired currency markets, with the yuan extending gains to a seven-month high, while other high-yielding, riskier units were also up against the US dollar.

Mr Trump said on Twitter that the US "has made substantial progress in our trade talks with China on important structural issues including intellectual property protection, technology transfer, agriculture, services, currency and many other issues".

He added: "As a result of these very productive talks, I will be delaying the US increase in tariffs now scheduled for March 1."

Mr Trump's tweeted remarks are the clearest sign yet that the US and China are moving towards a deal to end a trade war that has gone on for months, dragging on global growth and disrupting markets.

Mr Trump also said he planned to hold a summit with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida to sign a deal.

China's Xinhua news agency added that both sides had "made substantial progress on specific issues" including on transfer of technology and intellectual property.

Chinese blue chips hit their highest in eight months on the back of a 6 per cent gain, their biggest daily increase since July 2015.

Hong Kong and Tokyo ended 0.5 per cent higher. Sydney put on 0.3 per cent, while Seoul was 0.1 per cent higher, Taipei added 0.7 per cent and Jakarta rose 0.4 per cent.

Singapore's Straits Times Index, however, was little changed, inching up 2.45 points to 3,272.35.

The gains in Asia followed another positive lead from Wall Street, where the Dow enjoyed its ninth straight weekly gain – the longest streak since May 1995.

"This is a sigh of relief," said Mr Ben Emons managing director for global macro strategy at Medley Global Advisors . "Markets will still keep a level of caution, but this news is encouraging," he told Bloomberg TV.

The upbeat sentiment lifted high-risk currencies, with the yuan hitting its highest level against the US dollar since last July, while South Korea's won, the Australian dollar and the Indonesia rupiah were well up.

Forex traders will be closely watching speeches this week from top Federal Reserve officials – including chairman Jerome Powell's appearance in front of lawmakers – hoping for clues about its policy plans.

Wall Street "will be looking for soothing comments about the future size of the balance sheet – the bigger the better – and insights into future rate hikes", said senior market analyst Jeffrey Halley of Oanda.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

SEE BUSINESS C4

Doctor convicted of sexually assaulting patient but cleared of rape

Selina Lum
Law Correspondent

General practitioner Wee Teong Boo, 68, was cleared yesterday of raping a patient but convicted of sexual assault by penetration for inserting his fingers into the victim.

In acquitting Wee of rape, the High Court accepted medical evidence that he was suffering from erectile dysfunction at the time.

"There is a reasonable doubt as to whether penile penetration could have taken place as alleged in this case," said Justice Chua Lee Ming.

However, the judge said the fact remains that by his own admission, Wee had inserted his ungloved fingers into the victim, using his saliva as a lubricant. This occurred during a late-night consultation at his Bedok clinic in December 2015.

The judge rejected Wee's claim that he had done so to conduct an internal examination out of suspicion that the victim, then a 23-year-old student, could be suffering from pelvic inflammation disease (PID).

Justice Chua noted there was no mention of PID in the medical case notes. Wee claimed he did not write this down because he had two impatient patients waiting outside, but this cut no ice with the judge.

The judge also rejected Wee's explanations for not using gloves, proper lubricant and for not asking the patient if she needed a chaperone. Wee claimed that he forgot these basic requirements because he was "caught off guard" by her complaint of a genital itch.

"I do not accept his explanation. The accused is a very experienced doctor with 37 years' standing at the material time. His composure during cross-examination also showed he was not easily flustered," said Justice Chua.

The judge added that Wee had no reason to carry out an internal examination without establishing the patient's sexual history, which is part of the procedure.

The judge said Wee Teong Boo (left) had no reason to carry out an internal examination without establishing the patient's sexual history, which is part of the procedure for investigating possible pelvic inflammation disease. ST FILE PHOTO

He cited expert opinion that an investigation for PID would not start with a digital examination.

Wee was also convicted of a second charge of molesting the victim during an earlier consultation.

Sentencing was adjourned to tomorrow afternoon. Sexual assault by penetration carries the same prescribed sentence as rape – jail of up to 20 years, with caning or a fine. Wee cannot be caned as he is more than 50 years old.

Originally charged with one count each of rape and molestation, he had contested the charges in a trial that began in April last year.

The victim, who cannot be named to protect her identity, had been a regular patient at his clinic, Wee's Clinic & Surgery, since 2014.

On Nov 25, 2015, she consulted Wee for gastric discomfort.

She said that while she was on the examination bed for him to check her abdomen, he stroked her genital area. She said she felt uneasy, but thought it was part of the medical examination.

A month later, at about 11.30pm on Dec 30, she returned to the clinic complaining of frequent urination and an itch in her genital area. Lying on the bed, she said she heard the sound of a zipper and felt something "poke" her. She said she then saw his trousers were unzipped and realised he was raping her.

When she returned home, she washed herself and soaked her bloodstained underwear in a pail of water. She told her mother what had happened and made a police report later that same morning.

A medical examination found two small superficial wounds in her genital area and a fresh hymenal tear. Tests on the underwear showed no traces of semen, with insufficient DNA detected.

During the trial, which ended in October last year, medical evidence was submitted, with Wee's experts saying that he was suffering from erectile dysfunction and raising doubts over an earlier test, done in January 2016, which showed he was normal.

selinal@sph.com.sg

Khaw fractures arm; Vivian is Acting Transport Minister

Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan (above) will step in for Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan (top).

Foreign Minister will oversee talks with Malaysia on several transport-related matters

Ng Huiwen and Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan is Acting Transport Minister and will oversee ongoing discussions with Malaysia on several transport-related issues, as Mr Khaw Boon Wan recovers from a broken arm.

Mr Khaw, the Transport Minister and Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure, is on extended medical leave after fracturing his left arm in a fall last week, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said yesterday.

The Straits Times understands that Mr Khaw, 66, is expected to undergo minor surgery this week.

The PMO said Mr Khaw has been warded in hospital and is receiving treatment, and "will resume duties when he is able to do so, probably after several weeks".

The Ministry of Transport (MOT) did not respond when asked about details of Mr Khaw's injury, such as where and how he fell.

Meanwhile, Dr Balakrishnan, 58, will step in as Acting Transport Minister. "This ensures that the ongoing discussions with Malaysia on several transport matters will continue to be well coordinated," the PMO said.

Both countries have been locked in a maritime dispute after Malaysia unilaterally extended the Johor Baru port limits last October, encroaching on territorial waters that Singapore regards as its own.

In response, Singapore extended its own port limits in December.

A joint working group is studying the legal and operational matters to de-escalate the situation on the ground. Earlier this month, a Malaysian government vessel and a Greek carrier collided in Singapore territorial waters off Tuas.

Separately, the two countries also had a disagreement over Singapore's introduction of new landing procedures for Seletar Airport and Malaysia's subsequent decision to declare a restricted zone over Pasir Gudang for the purpose of military activities. Both sides have agreed to mutually suspend these measures till the end of next month while they negotiate the issues.

The PMO said yesterday that Senior Ministers of State for Transport Lam Pin Min and Janil Puthucheary, with Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Transport Baey Yam Keng, will help Dr Balakrishnan in the upcoming parliamentary debate on MOT's spending plans.

Mr Khaw had said in an interview in December that he would play a "supportive role" in the debate, while Dr Lam and Dr Puthucheary take the lead.

Meanwhile, Mr Khaw's duties in Sembawang GRC will be covered by the other MPs in the constituency.

Mr Amrin Amin, who is Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs and Health, was at Mr Khaw's Meet-The-People session yesterday evening, held at Block 789 Woodlands Avenue 6.

Mr Vikram Nair is scheduled to cover next Monday's session.

In 2012, Mr Khaw fractured his left arm and wore a brace in May during the by-election campaign for Hougang SMC.

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg
adrianl@sph.com.sg

What's Good
LOOKING AT THE UPSIDE

Share the upside of life in ST's Facebook group str.sg/whatsgood

Read positive stories at our microsite str.sg/stwhatsgood

Library talks by seasoned journalists
CO-ORGANISED BY THE STRAITS TIMES AND NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD

askST@NLB
you ask, we answer, come listen

Under the skin of a world-class athlete

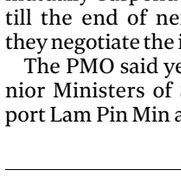
B1-01 Programme Zone
Central Public Library
100 Victoria Street

Thursday, March 7, 2019
7 to 8.30pm
(Registration starts at 6pm)

Sign up at
http://str.sg/askRohit1

For more information, go to
www.straitstimes.com/askst

Speakers



Rohit Brijnath
Assistant Sports Editor, The Straits Times

Jasmine Ser
National shooter

Get up to $400 off Samsung handsets and unlimited data at less than $1 a day.

Samsung Galaxy S9
$0
on Combo 3
U.P. $198

Samsung Galaxy Note9 (512GB)
$268
on Combo 3
with unlimited local data
U.P. $668

LIMITED TIME OFFER
UNLIMITED DATA
at $29.90/mth (U.P. $39.90/mth)
with DATA X INFINITY

PRE-ORDER BEFORE 7 MARCH
NEW
Samsung Galaxy S10+ (512GB)
$308
on Combo 6
with unlimited local data
U.P. $708

FREE Samsung Galaxy S10+ Starter Kit
Galaxy Buds + Wireless Charger Duo
(worth $386)

BUSINESS CIRCLE
Sign up for a new mobile line and join the circle.

Visit singtel.com/business-circle to find out more.

Singtel Shop Comcentre | 1800-SME-1111 (1800-763-1111) | business.singtelshop.com

Terms and Conditions
All offers are valid till 6 March 2019 and are applicable to business-registered customers who sign up for a plan with a minimum 2-year contract (new or recontract) unless otherwise stated. Pricing shown includes handset discounts. Samsung Galaxy S10+ pre-order is only available via Business eShop and the SME hotline. **Business Circle:** Not applicable to NRIC, Corporate Individual Scheme and Corporate Volume Discount Scheme customers. For full Business Circle's terms and conditions, visit singtel.com/business-circle. All Singtel's general terms & conditions apply. Copyright © 2019 Singapore Telecommunications Ltd (CRN: 199201624D). All rights reserved.

Trump signals softening of stance, scoffs at critics in US

Workers putting up decorations outside the Melia Hanoi Hotel yesterday, one of the possible places where North Korean leader Kim Jong Un may stay. Vietnam has released few details about arrangements for the summit, including the specific venue or timing. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

He says he is in no rush to sign deal on denuclearisation; end to Korean War a possibility at summit, says S. Korea

WASHINGTON/HANOI • US President Donald Trump has said he would be happy as long as North Korea maintains its pause on weapons testing, and he was in no rush to strike a nuclear deal with its leader, Mr Kim Jong Un, when they hold their second summit this week.

Meanwhile, hopes that Mr Trump and Mr Kim will formally declare an end to the 1950-53 Korean War at the Hanoi summit rose yesterday, after South Korea said the two leaders could reach an agreement.

The two men will meet in Hanoi tomorrow and on Thursday, eight months after their historic summit in Singapore, which was the first between a sitting US president and a North Korean leader.

There, they had pledged to work towards the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but their vague agreement has produced few results.

US Democratic senators and security officials have warned Mr Trump against cutting a deal that would do little to curb North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

As Mr Kim made his way across China by train for the summit, North Korean state media warned Mr Trump on Sunday not to listen to US critics who it said were disrupting efforts to improve ties.

Mr Trump, speaking in Washington on the eve of his departure for Vietnam, said he believed he saw eye to eye with Mr Kim, and that they had developed "a very, very good relationship".

"I am not in a rush. I don't want to rush anybody," Mr Trump said. "I just don't want testing. As long as there is no testing, we are happy."

North Korea conducted its last nuclear test, its sixth, in September 2017. It last tested an intercontinental ballistic missile in November 2017.

The Trump administration has pressed the North to give up its nuclear weapons programme which, combined with its missile capabilities, poses a threat to the United States, before it can expect any concessions.

However, in recent days, Mr Trump has signalled a possible softening, saying that he would love to be able to remove sanctions if there was meaningful progress on denuclearisation.

Mr Trump said he and Mr Kim expected to make further progress at the summit, and again held out the promise that denuclearisation would help North Korea develop its economy.

He scoffed at critics of his handling of North Korea, and added that Chinese President Xi Jinping has been supportive of US efforts.

Mr Trump will arrive in Vietnam this evening, Vietnam's Foreign Ministry said. He will meet Vietnam President Nguyen Phu Trong, who is also general secretary of the ruling Communist Party, tomorrow morning, the ministry said.

Mr Kim is making his way to Vietnam, through China, by train, and is expected to arrive early today.

NO RUSH TO DENUCLEARISE

"I am not in a rush. I don't want to rush anybody. I just don't want testing. As long as there is no testing, we are happy."

US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP, on North Korea maintaining a pause on nuclear weapons testing.

Meanwhile, South Korea's presidential Blue House spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom told reporters yesterday about the possibility that the Korean War would be formally declared over at the summit.

"There is no way of knowing what kind of declaration it might be, but I believe the US and North Korea may reach an agreement," he said.

The devastating conflict between communist North Korea, backed by China, and the capitalist South, aided by the US, ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty, leaving Pyongyang and Washington still technically at war.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Vietnam train station closed to public ahead of Kim's expected arrival

DONG DANG (Vietnam) • The train station on the Vietnam-China border where Mr Kim Jong Un is expected to arrive by rail was closed to the public and surrounded by armed guards yesterday, days ahead of the North Korean leader's summit with United States President Donald Trump.

Mr Kim boarded his trademark olive-green train in Pyongyang last Saturday, and its armoured carriages were later spotted crossing a bridge into China, although it reportedly bypassed Beijing.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency said the train passed through the Chinese city of Hengyang at about 3.30pm yesterday. Sources in Vietnam said Mr Kim was expected to arrive at the Dong Dang border station in the early hours today following his epic 4,000km, 2½-day journey.

In an unprecedented move, the entire 170km stretch of road from Dong Dang to Hanoi will be completely closed from 6am to 2pm today for Mr Kim's motorcade.

An Agence France-Presse reporter at the scene saw armed guards stationed at Dong Dang station yesterday morning, while workers tended to the rail tracks.

"(The station) is closed, no public access. We don't know when it is closed until but around tomorrow," a guard told Agence France-Presse, requesting anonymity.

Mr Kim's route through China has remained a tightly guarded secret.

Ifeng, the online Chinese-language news website of Hong Kong-based Phoenix Television, posted a video on its Twitter-like Weibo account showing what it described as Mr Kim's special train passing through Wuhan in the central province of Hubei at 7.15am yesterday.

Vietnam has been hastily preparing for the second meeting between Mr Kim and Mr Trump after their historic first summit in Singapore in June last year.

It said last Saturday that Mr Kim would make an official visit to the country "in the coming days", but did not say whether that would be before or after the summit, which begins tomorrow and ends on Thursday.

Two sources told Agence France-Presse that Mr Kim would stay at a modern hotel in downtown Hanoi, about 1km from the colonial-era Government Guesthouse where the summit could take place.

The Melia Hanoi Hotel boasts gorgeous views of the city and is connected to Hanoi's only Rolls-Royce dealership catering to the city's growing class of super-rich.

The White House press centre will be set up at the same hotel, and North Korean security staff were seen entering the building on Sunday. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

Key members of North Korean leader's entourage

THE RIGHT-HAND MAN

Mr Kim Yong Chol, a senior party official and the counterpart to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, has been on the front lines of the ongoing diplomacy between Pyongyang and Washington.

He is seen as Mr Kim Jong Un's most trusted aide and is accompanying him on his olive-green train en route to Vietnam.

Mr Kim Yong Chol flew to Washington with a letter for President Donald Trump from the North Korean leader last month, after which the White House announced the second summit to break months of deadlock since the first meeting in Singapore last June.

He was in charge of overseeing negotiations in Singapore – the first-ever summit between the leaders of the United States and North Korea – and likely remains a key player in Hanoi.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (right) talking with his trusted aide Kim Yong Chol, who has been the country's lead negotiator in the ongoing diplomacy with the US. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ms Kim Yo Jong, the sister of the North Korean leader, has been a constant presence at his side on the international stage. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

THE SISTER

Ms Kim Yo Jong has been at her brother's side since his debut on the international stage in a visit to Beijing last year, and is once again travelling with him, this time to Hanoi.

She has been on hand at all times – taking her brother's coat, studiously writing down his remarks and handing him a pen for signing joint statements with leaders of China, South Korea and the US.

She grabbed headlines at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics last year as the public face of the North Korean delegation sent to the Games.

But she has also earned a reputation of unknowingly putting herself before the camera, straying into the shots of her brother and heads of state on several occasions before scurrying out of the picture.

THE ENVOY

Mr Kim Hyok Chol arrived in Hanoi one week ahead of the summit for preparatory talks with US special envoy Stephen Biegun.

A former North Korean ambassador to Spain – before he was expelled amid soaring nuclear tensions in 2017 – Mr Kim Hyok Chol was introduced as Mr Biegun's counterpart last month when he visited the White House with Mr Kim Yong Chol.

Mr Kim Hyok Chol and Mr Biegun have engaged in marathon negotiations and are expected to wrangle over the agenda of the summit – likely to include the terms of denuclearisation – until the actual day of the meeting.

Mr Kim Hyok Chol

Mr Kim Chang Son

THE BUTLER

Mr Kim Chang Son is the de facto chief of staff to the North Korean leader, overseeing the security and protocol of key events attended by Mr Kim Jong Un.

Both the North Korean leader and his sister are reportedly very fond of Mr Kim Chang Son, who served as the "trusted butler" to the Kim family under Mr Kim Jong Il – the late father and predecessor to Mr Kim Jong Un.

Mr Kim Chang Son arrived in Hanoi nearly two weeks ahead of the Feb 27-28 meeting, closely touring and inspecting prospective sites for the summit and the accommodation of the North Korean leadership.

Some 100 bodyguards for the North Korean leader arriving at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi on Sunday, ahead of Mr Kim Jong Un's arrival. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

THE BODYGUARDS

Around 100 North Korean bodyguards flew in from Pyongyang on Sunday as their leader was passing through China towards Hanoi, according to Vietnamese media.

The army of security officials remained at arm's length from Mr Kim Jong Un at his landmark meeting with Mr Donald Trump – from the summit venues to when he roamed the streets of Singapore in a surprise night out on the eve of the meeting.

The men – dressed in matching sharp, black suits – earned the nickname "human shield" at Mr Kim's first summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in, when a dozen of them trotted alongside his Mercedes-Benz.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

WORLD

THERESA MAY
BRITISH PM MAY BE FORCED TO DELAY BREXIT **A14**

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (left in photo) told Bloomberg in a Feb 13 interview that Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad will leave the post within two years. But Tun Dr Mahathir told the Indonesia media last week that he needs at least 2½ years to fix Malaysia's problems. PHOTO: BERNAMA

Anwar presses on for power transfer as KL faces backlash

PH leaders differ on handover time amid public unhappiness

Shannon Teoh
Malaysia Bureau Chief
In Kuala Lumpur

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has subtly ramped up pressure for the promised transition of power to him from Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, even as their Pakatan Harapan (PH) government faces public backlash over discordant policies and a slowing economy.

While Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) publicly threw its support behind Tun Dr Mahathir on Sunday amid swirling rumours of a no-confidence vote against his administration, the party repeated Mr Anwar's recent claim that the Premier had agreed to hand over power to him within two years.

This is despite various PH leaders, including Mr Anwar himself, previously admitting that no deadline had been set for the 93-year-old Prime Minister to hand over the reins.

"No, of course, it is not five years," Mr Anwar told Bloomberg in a Feb 13 interview in New York when asked if he would allow his former mentor-turned-nemesis to serve a full term.

"He (Dr Mahathir) has made it very clear that he would not exceed two years," the PKR president said.

But less than a week later, the Premier poured cold water on the assertion.

Speaking to Indonesian media last Tuesday, Dr Mahathir said "I need 2½ to three years to fix the prevailing problems" of over RM1 trillion (S$332 billion) in liabilities inherited from the ousted Barisan Nasional coalition and "the broken government machinery".

"We have agreed that Anwar Ibrahim will be my successor and I can work with him. I think that some time before the 15th election, I will relinquish my power," he added.

Observers have noted the narrow, yet clear discrepancies in timelines, especially after PKR's top leadership met on Sunday and issued a statement to bat away claims that the party is trying to undermine the Mahathir administration.

"Keadilan holds firm to the agreement reached and announced" on Jan 7 last year, the party said, referring to a crucial deal within PH agreed just months before last May's landmark election.

HEADING FOR FURTHER TENSION

Anwar may feel there is more of a case for change of course and leadership sooner rather than later but Mahathir's position remains relatively solid – setting the scene for further internal tension and discord.

MR PETER MUMFORD, head of Eurasia Group's South-east and South Asia practice.

"Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim will take over as the eighth prime minister after a period of two years. Keadilan stresses that the party's stand on this has not changed."

Party sources say the statement came as a result of a compromise between Mr Anwar's camp and a rival faction led by deputy president Azmin Ali.

The latter dominates the lion's share of the party's government positions under Dr Mahathir's nine-month-old rule, and is eager to quieten ongoing political rumblings.

Polls show ebbing approval for PH after it was accused of flip-flopping on campaign pledges and failing to address anxiety among the Malay-Muslim majority.

It lost a by-election for the first time last month in the Cameron Highlands vote, and next month's Semenyih ballot is turning out to be another bellwether of public satisfaction with the fledgling government.

Talk of a no-confidence vote against Dr Mahathir when Parliament reopens next month has been linked to figures in Mr Anwar's circle, although the 71-year-old stalwart claims it is a fabrication to drive a wedge within PH.

The four parties in PH control 125 of 222 seats in Parliament. Mr Anwar's PKR holds 50 seats, while the Premier's Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia has just 22 seats.

A leader who attended the Sunday meeting told The Straits Times: "Whether or not such plans are real is immaterial. Playing up these notions destabilises the government, and the statement issued means that any such talk will run foul of party discipline.

"On the other hand, the question of timing cannot be dictated by PKR alone as it was not part of the coalition's formal agreement."

But analysts like senior fellow Oh Ei Sun from the Singapore Institute of International Affairs caution that Mr Anwar "is playing a very dangerous game" by pressuring Dr Mahathir during a period of weakness, and could inherit a troubled house even if he succeeds.

"It is reminiscent of the duo's tussle in 1998 following the Asian financial crisis," he said, referring to the episode that resulted in national turmoil when Mr Anwar, then the deputy premier, was dismissed by Dr Mahathir and subsequently jailed for the controversial charges of sodomy and abuse of power.

Eurasia Group's South-east and South Asia practice head, Mr Peter Mumford, told The Straits Times: "Anwar may feel there is more of a case for change of course and leadership sooner rather than later but Mahathir's position remains relatively solid – setting the scene for further internal tension and discord."

shannont@sph.com.sg

PAS says govt too lenient with those who insult Islam

PHOTO: FACEBOOK/NASRUDIN HASSAN

KUALA LUMPUR • Opposition Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) has warned that it will organise a "monster" rally if the Pakatan Harapan (PH) government fails to take action against individuals who have insulted Islam.

The Islamist party's information chief, Mr Nasrudin Hassan, claimed yesterday that the government has been too lenient towards those who have insulted Islam, and cited the case of a Facebook user who was recently released from police custody after uploading a "rude caricature" of Prophet Muhammad and his wife Siti Aisyah.

"The Malaysian government has to be firm in its actions. Take care of Islamic sensitivities and that of its adherents. If the government is lazy and slow to act, it will cause those who insult the religion to be bolder," Mr Nasrudin said.

"If there is no firm action, the people will rise and a monster rally will be held to pressure the government to take action."

Mr Nasrudin said this following a statement from Malaysian police chief Mohamad Fuzi Harun on Sunday that the Facebook user identified as Foo Sing Wai was released on Feb 22.

"The 68-year-old suspect was arrested on Feb 19. However, due to his age and health complications, the suspect was released on Feb 22 on police bail," The Star quoted Tan Sri Fuzi as saying.

"The investigation paper has been forwarded to the deputy public prosecutor for further instruction," he said.

The sensitive issue of Islam is at the heart of an ongoing battle pitting the PH government against Malay-Muslim opposition parties PAS and Umno as both sides try to gain the support of the majority Malay electorate. The opposition has been painting PH as being weak to defend Malay and Muslim rights.

FIRM ACTION NEEDED

The Malaysian government has to be firm in its actions. Take care of Islamic sensitivities and that of its adherents. If the government is lazy and slow to act, it will cause those who insult the religion to be bolder.

OPPOSITION PARTI ISLAM SEMALAYSIA INFORMATION CHIEF NASRUDIN HASSAN

Mr Nasrudin said many people were stunned by the suspect's release especially since there have been 395 police reports lodged against Foo nationwide.

Moreover, the suspect was investigated under Section 298A of the Penal Code and Section 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998.

Under Section 298A, those found guilty of fostering religious disharmony can be punished with a jail term of between two and five years.

Under Section 233, those found guilty of improper use of network facilities can be fined up to RM50,000 (S$16,590), jailed for up to a year, or both, and incur a further fine of RM1,000 for every day the offence continues to be committed after conviction.

Mr Nasrudin said a woman who insulted Prophet Muhammad last year was jailed for six months and fined RM15,000. He said the suspect in the current case should not be allowed bail in the first place.

"PAS demands an explanation from the authorities to assuage the worries of Muslims," he said, adding that such "provocation cannot be forgiven".

5 kids in Johor test positive for diphtheria

They were in contact with unvaccinated two-year-old who reportedly died from disease last week

JOHOR BARU • Five children in Johor have tested positive for diphtheria after coming into contact with a two-year-old toddler who was believed to have died from the disease last week, turning the spotlight once again on parents who refuse to vaccinate their children.

Johor Health, Environment and Agriculture Committee chairman Sahruddin Jamal said the children, aged four and below, were among 52 people who tested positive for the disease.

"They (include)... the deceased's four-year-old sister, who also did not receive immunisation for diphtheria," he was quoted as saying by The Star news website yesterday.

The infected children, he said, have been placed in an isolation ward and are receiving medical care.

According to the World Health Organisation, no vaccine is 100 per cent effective and not all who are vaccinated develop immunity. But vaccinations significantly lower the risk of infection.

Malaysia has seen a rise in the number of children falling victim to contagious diseases in the last few years, and the health authorities worry that there are parents who reject immunisation programmes for fear that the vaccines used infringe strict religious rules. Though the Islamic authorities have waived the stringent halal requirement if suitable vaccines are not available, conservative Muslims sometimes reject innoculations over concerns that some vaccines may have the DNA of pigs, which Muslims are forbidden to consume.

Dr Sahruddin told The Star that four diphtheria cases had been reported in Johor since last October, including three children between 10 months and two years old.

"Two of them died and all three were not vaccinated," he said, adding that some 7 per cent of children in Johor did not receive vaccinations despite counselling.

The state government, said Dr Sahruddin, supported the Health Ministry's proposal to make vaccination compulsory.

"I am in full support of the proposal as there have been rare cases resurfacing in Johor such as diphtheria due to the refusal of certain parents to vaccinate their children".

Symptoms of diphtheria include fever, sore throat, a thick covering at the back of the throat and swollen tonsils.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Health Minister Dzulkefly Ahmad has said his ministry will table a proposal to make immunisation compulsory.

He was reported as saying by Bernama on Sunday: "I believe there will be arguments for and against the proposal, and the Ministry of Health will consider all views seriously."

Separately, Dr Dzulkefly's deputy, Dr Lee Boon Chye, said the vaccination rate for toddlers nine months old and above is only 89 per cent. He said the ministry is targeting a vaccination rate of 95 per cent for effective control of vaccine-preventable diseases such as diphtheria and neonatal tetanus.

"The percentage of children getting their first doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccines by their fifth birthday has reached our target but not for the vaccination given to children nine months old and above, which is now only at 89 per cent," he said on Sunday.

Malaysia's Health Ministry is proposing to make vaccination a must as some conservative Muslims reject innoculation for fear of infringing religious rules. PHOTO: THE STAR/ ASIA NEWS NETWORK

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The percentage of children getting their first doses of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccines by their fifth birthday has reached our target but not for the vaccination given to children nine months old and above, which is now only at 89 per cent.

DR LEE BOON CHYE, Malaysia's Deputy Health Minister, on the ministry's target of 95 per cent vaccination rate for effective control of vaccine-preventable diseases such as diphtheria and neonatal tetanus.

The Dragon Star ferry caught fire minutes after it departed from the Kuah Terminal in Langkawi yesterday. As the blaze spread, some passengers plunged into the sea to escape. Others quickly moved onto boats in the area. All the passengers were rescued by nearby vessels plying the busy sea lane between Langkawi and mainland Malaysia. PHOTO: YOUTUBE/ACOY RAHIM

52 rescued from Langkawi ferry fire; no injury reported

LANGKAWI • Fifty-two passengers of a ferry from Langkawi island heading towards a jetty in Perlis state were rescued after the vessel caught fire yesterday.

The ferry caught fire minutes after it departed from the Kuah Terminal in Langkawi.

The blaze that engulfed the ferry Dragon Star occurred 3km off Kuah, the main town on the popular holiday island in northern Malaysia.

All passengers escaped unscathed.

They were rescued by nearby vessels plying the busy sea lane between Langkawi and mainland Malaysia.

One of Malaysia's most popular holiday destinations, Langkawi is an archipelago of more than 90 islands. The islands form the federal constituency of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad.

The Kedah Fire and Rescue Department operation centre said it was told of the ferry fire at 2.48pm, and a rescue team was dispatched to the scene at 2.56pm.

A passenger first spotted the blaze and raised the alarm, the fire department said.

Videos on social media show the fire burning through the rear section of the vessel.

As the blaze spread, some passengers plunged into the sea to escape. Others quickly moved onto boats in the area.

The authorities dispatched rescue boats to the scene, aided by vessels from the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency and nearby vessels.

Firemen boarded the ferry to put out the fire and to ensure no passengers were trapped.

The cause of the fire was not immediately known.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

HK boy, 12, dies after choking on beef ball

A 12-year-old boy died in Hong Kong on Sunday, after choking on a beef ball last Friday.

The Secondary 1 student, identified by local media reports as Chau, was returning home from school in the Wong Tai Sin district at about 5pm last Friday when he stopped at an eatery to get snacks.

He bought a siew mai, fishballs and beef balls for HK$24 (S$4).

But as he was walking home to the Chuk Yuen South Estate, he took a bite off a beef ball and choked on it.

English-language newspaper The Standard said the boy was clutching his neck and gasping for air when he was spotted by a security guard.

She called for an ambulance and he was taken to the Caritas Medical Centre. He was later transferred to the intensive care unit at the Princess Margaret Hospital, where he died at 8.50am on Sunday.

According to Hong Kong tabloid Apple Daily, the boy had suffered from brain damage due to a lack of oxygen in his brain.

This led to multiple organ failure.

His teachers and classmates visited him at the hospital last Saturday and prayed for his recovery, but they had been told that the situation was not optimistic.

Speaking to The Standard, Hong Kong College of Emergency Medicine president Axel Siu reminded people that they should not eat while talking or walking.

"When people swallow too fast or eat while walking, food can drop into the airway," he said.

He added that those who see signs of choking, such as a person's face turning blue, should help by performing the Heimlich manoeuvre.

There have been other cases of children choking on food in recent months. In August last year, a seven-year-old boy in Malaysia died after choking on the seed of a rambutan fruit.

Last March, a two-year-old girl died after choking on a grape at home in Hong Kong.

Ng Huiwen

Jokowi puts economy at heart of re-election campaign

JAKARTA • Mr Joko Widodo has put the economy at the centre of his pitch to voters, pointing to job creation and higher purchasing power as key to alleviating poverty for scores of Indonesians.

As he seeks to build momentum ahead of the April 17 election, the Indonesian President, known popularly as Jokowi, in a speech on Sunday underscored progress made in infrastructure during his first term.

He also outlined key policy objectives should he win, focusing on a positive theme of taking Indonesia forward.

"I am optimistic that hard work will transform the lives of the Indonesian people," Mr Joko said in Bogor, near the capital Jakarta.

"We will continue to reduce poverty through the creation of employment, economy, stronger purchasing power, comprehensive social security," he said.

While polls show Mr Joko holding a commanding lead of about 20 points over his presidential rival, former general Prabowo Subianto, the gap has narrowed.

Mr Prabowo has campaigned aggressively. Some suggest he could spring a "Mahathir-like" upset, following Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's unlikely electoral victory last year.

The opposition has sharpened its attack on Mr Joko's economic performance in recent weeks, seizing on a ballooning trade deficit and surging public debt.

Mr Joko put development of the vast Indonesian archipelago at the heart of his first term, with hundreds of billions of dollars spent on an ambitious infrastructure programme.

On Sunday, he called for the country to work together to "build an advanced Indonesia", while adding that "our work is not finished".

He also urged unity, a common message in his first term, which has been marked by demonstrations in the capital led by hardline Muslim groups, a string of terror attacks and devastating natural disasters.

"We need to unite now to face the threat of division and setbacks," he said.

Appealing to the tens of millions of lower-paid Indonesians, Mr Joko flagged the expansion of a scheme of free food cards as a key policy.

He also highlighted the village fund programme that helps local governments finance development projects, promising to boost funding to 400 trillion rupiah (S$38.5 billion) over the next five years.

Mr Joko has made inroads into addressing poverty. The number of so-called "poor people" has fallen by about two million to 25.7 million since he took office, according to official figures as of last September.

While the economy has struggled to fire under Mr Joko, the nation's jobless rate has fallen to almost a 20-year low at 5.3 per cent.

He has also managed to keep a lid on cost of living pressures as the election approaches, with inflation easing last month to 2.8 per cent, its lowest since August 2016. BLOOMBERG

While polls show Mr Joko holding a commanding lead of about 20 points over his presidential rival, former general Prabowo Subianto, the gap has narrowed. Mr Prabowo has campaigned aggressively. Some suggest he could spring a "Mahathir-like" upset, following Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's unlikely electoral victory last year.

A ZTE robot musician playing the piano at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona. Minister for Communications and Information S. Iswaran yesterday announced at the trade show that Singapore is issuing a paper on data portability to consider how it could be effectively implemented in Singapore. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

S'pore considering data portability for service providers

Move will give consumers more control over their data, says Iswaran

Vincent Chang
In Barcelona (Spain)

Consumers could soon find it easier to switch from a service provider to another without losing their past records, such as loan repayment and purchase histories.

They could also be able to transfer their data to another service provider in a different industry.

For example, a person who uses wearables like smart watches and fitness bands will have data such as his height, weight, body mass index, heart rate and running routes stored with the manufacturer. He could transfer this data to an insurance company, which may then determine that his lifestyle makes him less of a risk and hence offer him a more attractive insurance premium.

These are some of the possible scenarios with the introduction of a data portability requirement for service providers as part of an ongoing review of the Personal Data Protection Act.

A service provider is any business or organisation that collects a consumer's data in order to render a service, such as a bank, an insurance firm, an Internet service provider or an online retailer.

When the data portability requirement is introduced, a service provider will have to transmit an individual's personal data to another provider upon the individual's request.

This means that consumers do not need to re-enter data that they have given to another service provider.

Businesses can also access more diverse or larger data sets, which could be used to develop products and services that are better tailored to customers' needs.

From the market perspective, data portability could also lower barriers to entry for new firms.

FINE BALANCE

Data is a key enabler of digital transformation, but a delicate balance must be struck between data protection and business innovation.

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION S. ISWARAN

Minister for Communications and Information S. Iswaran made the announcement at the annual mobile industry trade show Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, yesterday.

"Data is a key enabler of digital transformation, but a delicate balance must be struck between data protection and business innovation," Mr Iswaran said.

"Today, Singapore is issuing a discussion paper on data portability. It sets out our thoughts through the lens of personal data protection, competition and data flows to support services and innovation in the digital economy. We hope more can join us in this international discourse and work together to build a trusted global environment for business innovation."

Developed by the Personal Data Protection Commission of Singapore and the Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore, the Data Portability Discussion Paper makes the case for how data portability can support business innovation, while allowing consumers to have more control over their data.

The paper is also intended to serve as a starting point for the discussion on how data portability could be effectively implemented in Singapore.

Globally, the general trend is towards data portability. Many countries, including Australia, India, Japan, the Philippines and the United States, have either implemented data portability or are considering enacting regulations on data portability.

vinchang@sph.com.sg

Rival firms refute Huawei founder's claim of tech superiority

Yip Wai Yee

Rival telecoms equipment makers have refuted Huawei founder Ren Zhengfei's claim that his firm's technology is more advanced, with industry watchers attributing Huawei's gains on rivals in recent years to aggressive pricing strategies.

A spokesman for Nokia told The Straits Times: "It's clear that we have an end-to-end portfolio that is unmatched by others."

He cited some 20 deals for 5G equipment that Nokia has inked to date, noting that the firm is also working with close to all the major telecoms operators in the United States, Japan and South Korea.

In a Financial Times interview, Mr Borje Ekholm, chief executive of Swedish telecoms equipment maker Ericsson, also rejected the notion that the Chinese company had more advanced 5G equipment.

He said Ericsson has signed 10 deals and 42 memorandums of understanding with global networks, and the company has shipped more than three million 5G-ready radios to customers worldwide.

When ST contacted Ericsson and Cisco Systems, both declined to comment on Huawei's claims.

In an interview with BBC aired last week, Mr Ren said "the world cannot leave us because we are more advanced" and "there's no way the United States can crush us".

The 74-year-old former engineer with the People's Liberation Army in China rarely speaks to the media. His surprising comments came as the US continues to mount pressure on its international allies to block the use of Huawei's 5G technology for fear that China could use its equipment for espionage.

The fifth generation of wireless mobile communication technology promises surfing speeds of up to 100 times faster than on 4G networks, and the ability to accommodate more users and connected devices, including self-driving cars.

So far, Australia and New Zealand have followed the US in banning Huawei from supplying 5G technology, while Japan has banned government purchases of Huawei equipment. Other nations such as Britain and Poland have indicated their concerns over the Chinese tech giant.

Industry watchers said Huawei became the world's largest producer of telecoms equipment because it undercut rivals.

Mr Aloysius Cheang, executive vice-president for Asia-Pacific at the Centre for Strategic Cyberspace + International Studies think-tank in London, said Huawei is not technologically superior. Its products are comparable with those of other leading vendors like Nokia, Ericsson and Cisco Systems, he added.

But it is known that Huawei sells equipment that is at least 10 per cent cheaper than its rivals'.

Huawei is also known to allow for payments to be deferred, said Mr Mike Ang, president of the Association of the Telecommunications Industry of Singapore.

ST understands that while most vendors offer some form of financial assistance, Huawei is more aggressive in providing financial help, allowing buyers to defer payment for up to three years.

Huawei is out to prove that it gives the best bang for the buck, making it a "formidable force" to be reckoned with, Mr Ang said, although he noted that Mr Ren's claim is a "sweeping statement".

The Chinese giant is also known to have gone the extra mile to secure large markets in developing countries, including at least 40 African nations. For instance, it delivered mobile coverage to rural communities in areas of Ghana and Nigeria by rolling out low-cost, solar-powered base stations.

It also reportedly invested more than US$60 million (S$81 million) in the telecoms network in Angola.

Mr Cheang said: "Providing infrastructure to developing countries is akin to giving them bread and butter; Huawei filled that need aptly."

yipwy@sph.com.sg

Chinese handset makers unveil 5G phones at trade show

Huawei consumer business group chief Richard Yu presenting the 5G-capable Mate X at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona on Sunday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Xiaomi senior vice-president Wang Xiang with the Mi 9 and Mi Mix 3 5G phones at a launch event ahead of Mobile World Congress on Sunday. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

BARCELONA • Chinese handset makers trotted out their latest smartphones built for faster 5G networks at the biggest trade show for mobile technology, amid tensions between the US and China over the use of Chinese firm Huawei's equipment to build such networks.

At the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, the world's fourth-largest smartphone maker Xiaomi became one of the first to put a price on its 5G smartphone.

The Mi Mix 3 5G, with prices starting from €599 (S$918), to be launched in May. The low price elicited gasps from congress audience. Xiaomi has not said when the phone will be available in Singapore.

The world's largest handset maker Samsung was the first to announce a 5G mobile phone – a variant of its flagship Galaxy S10 smartphone – last week, but did not reveal the pricing or availability.

Huawei said its 5G-capable Mate X will start at €2,299. The device has a foldable screen that extends from 6.6 inches to 8 inches when unfurled.

South Korea's LG and China's Oppo have also made 5G smartphone announcements here, although they have yet to release the pricing or availability of their models.

Unlike critical network infrastructure, 5G smartphones are unlikely to face any scrutiny over the origin of the chips enabling their 5G functionality. The majority of these phones – from 18 device makers to date – use American firm Qualcomm's X50 5G modem.

Depending on the mobile connection, 5G networks can be 10 to 100 times faster than 4G networks. A 1GB movie can be downloaded in about three seconds.

Qualcomm said its 5G modem can achieve a peak theoretical download speed of 5Gbps, compared with 4G smartphones that can reach slightly over 1Gbps on 4G networks. Real-world speeds, though, are likely to be much lower.

Huawei's Mate X uses its own Balong 5G modem. Its consumer business chief described Mate X as the world's fastest 5G smartphone.

Apple, which does not have a presence at the congress, is unlikely to introduce a 5G iPhone this year, according to a Bloomberg report.

The 5G smartphones on show at the congress are early prototypes and the actual devices are expected to be shipped later this year. Even so, it could take a while before most consumers can enjoy the benefits of the technology.

Forrester Research vice-president Thomas Husson said it will take another five to seven years before 5G phones are adopted by the masses in most countries.

"Telcos and network equipment providers should learn from 3G and 4G roll-outs and not overpromise on the technology," he said.

Also, 5G is at "the centre of the economic and political war between the US and China" because it will be the backbone of a fully connected world, he added.

The US has been urging its allies to ban Huawei's 5G equipment because of fears that the equipment could be used by the Chinese government for espionage.

In Singapore, 5G networks are slated to roll out after 2020. But 5G phones may be available in the city state before the roll-out.

Mr Alexander Dehmel, manager at market research firm GfK, said: "Singapore, being a strategic hub in Asia, will be one of the first few hotbed markets for brands to launch their latest product innovation and technology."

Vincent Chang

2013

Dec 30
ISIS militants in Iraq take control of Fallujah and parts of Ramadi in Iraq.

2014

Jan 13
ISIS takes over Raqqa in Syria.

June 10
ISIS takes over Mosul in Iraq.

June 29
ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announces the establishment of a caliphate and gives the group its current name, "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)".

Aug 2-3
ISIS conquers Kurdish towns of Sinjar and Zumar, forcing thousands of Yazidis to flee and enslaving women and children.

Sept 23
The US launches its first air strikes against ISIS in Syria.

2015

Jan 7
Gunmen attack the offices of French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris, killing 11 people. A third assailant carries out a synchronised attack on a supermarket, taking hostages and killing four.

May 20
ISIS seizes the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra (left).

May 21
ISIS militants take full control of Sirte, Libya – Muammar Gaddafi's hometown.

Sept 30
Russia begins air strikes in Syria.

Oct 31
Egypt's ISIS affiliate claims responsibility for bombing a Russian passenger plane over the Sinai Peninsula, killing all 224 on board.

Nov 13
ISIS carries out a series of coordinated attacks in Paris (above), killing 130 people.

2016

March 22
Three explosions at the Zaventem airport and a metro station in Brussels kill at least 30 people and injure dozens of others.

June 12
A gunman attacks a popular gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, killing more than four dozen people and injuring at least 53.

July 3
ISIS militants carry out a suicide bombing that kills more than 300 people in a busy shopping street in Baghdad.

July 14
A 31-year-old Tunisian man drives a truck through a crowd in Nice, France, and kills 86 people.

Dec 6
Libyan forces declare victory over ISIS.

2017

March 22
A vehicle strikes people walking on Westminster Bridge in London, killing three and injuring 40 before crashing near the British Parliament. The driver stabs and kills a police officer before being shot and killed by police.

May 8
Muhammad Wanndy Mohamed Jedi (right), Malaysia's most-wanted ISIS member, is killed in Syria.

May 22
A suicide bomber strikes outside Manchester Arena at the close of a concert, killing 22 and injuring 59.

May 23
ISIS-affiliated militants lay siege to the Philippine city of Marawi.

June 29
Iraqi troops capture the Grand Mosque in Mosul.

2018

Oct 17
Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte declares Marawi liberated after a five-month siege.

Oct 20
US-backed Syrian forces declare victory over ISIS in its former capital Raqqa after a four-month campaign.

May 13
A string of suicide bombings by an ISIS-inspired group in Surabaya, Indonesia, leave 27 dead, including 13 of the suspected suicide bombers.

Dec 19
US President Donald Trump orders a withdrawal of US forces from Syria, but later backtracks.

2019

Feb 25
US-backed forces poised to capture the last 0.5 sq km of territory held by ISIS in Syria, marking the end of the caliphate as a proto-state.

PHOTOS: REUTERS, TEMPO, THE STAR
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

ISIS' shrinking territory

Territory controlled by ISIS
Assad regime and other forces
Thinly populated zones

January 2015

January 2016

January 2017

February 2018

January 2019

LAST POCKET OF ISIS TERRITORY
Aided by the warplanes and artillery of a US-led coalition, Kurdish-led forces have pressed ISIS into a patch of less than 4 sq km

Above: A screen grab of a video published by ISIS in 2015 of smoke billowing from the Baal Shamin temple in Syria that the group reportedly destroyed.
Left: A man with his daughter walking towards Iraqi special forces soldiers during a battle in Iraq in 2017. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

A member loyal to ISIS waving the terror group's flag in Raqqa, Syria, in June 2014, when the caliphate was declared. PHOTO: REUTERS

Above: A screen grab of a video released by ISIS on Jan 20, 2015, showing Japanese hostages Kenji Goto (left) and Haruna Yukawa (right) with an ISIS militant. ISIS threatened to kill the two Japanese men unless Tokyo paid a US$200 million (S$270 million) ransom to compensate for pledging aid to support the campaign against ISIS. The two men were reportedly beheaded later that month. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

ISIS IS DOWN BUT IT IS NOT OUT YET

The 'caliphate' is no more as the proto-state declared by ISIS has been reduced to a mere scrap of land in the Syrian town of Baghuz. But while the group is down, it is not yet out for the count. Arvind Jayaram tracks its rise and fall, and the threat it still poses.

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) self-proclaimed "caliphate" in the Middle East is on the verge of collapse, but the threat posed by the terror group, known for its depravity and cruelty, still persists.

The group began as a faction that splintered from Al-Qaeda in the chaos after the United States invasion of Iraq and was originally known as the Islamic State in Iraq. But ISIS rapidly surpassed its predecessor to emerge as the world's deadliest terror threat, with loyal support from extremists around the world.

Brutal tactics and a twisted interpretation of Islam were central to the group's ability to attract and radicalise Muslims from around the world, whether they were schoolgirls from the UK who ran away from home to marry ISIS fighters, or a Tunisian resident of France who drove a truck into crowds in Nice on Bastille Day.

Militants from Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, France, Germany, Sweden, the US, Britain and Russia are among the foreigners known to have flocked to fight under its banner.

In this, ISIS' propaganda machine – disseminating videos that distorted Islamic teachings and encouraged "lone wolf" attacks by supporters – had a key role in enticing would-be Islamists by constantly releasing graphic content that glamorised guerilla warfare and public executions, including beheading, drowning and immolation.

The group's early successes on the battlefield in Iraq and Syria stemmed largely from its ability to wage its violent insurgency under the radar of world powers. ISIS broke ranks with Al-Qaeda in 2006 to go its own way, but it was not as well known as the Osama bin Laden-led terror group until 2014.

ISIS seized the city of Fallujah in Iraq on Dec 30, 2013, and used the strife of the civil war in Syria to overrun Raqqa the next month. It went on to capture Mosul and Tikrit in Iraq, and captured border areas in both Syria and Iraq.

The occupation of a third of Iraq's territory by some estimates and large swathes of Syria emboldened the group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, to declare in June 2014, from the ramparts of the famous Grand Mosque in Mosul, a caliphate roughly the size of Britain.

Thus began a reign of terror as ISIS embarked upon a systematic campaign to spread its virulent version of Islam in a fashion that would shock the world into action.

In Syria, the group murdered hundreds of members of the Sheitaat tribe, while in Iraq, it slaughtered thousands of Yazidis and sold women and children into sexual slavery. Western and other hostages were beheaded in slickly produced videos intended to lure fighters to the caliphate.

One of the most notorious executioners, a British man known as "Jihadi John", featured in many of the videos, speaking in an English accent before he murdered captives. Other videos featured captives being burned alive or drowned in cages. In at least one video, children carried out executions of captives.

One of the most horrific videos showed young Shi'ite army recruits being executed and their bodies being tossed into mass graves on the banks of the Tigris River outside Tikrit. That atrocity, known as the Camp Speicher Massacre, left an estimated 1,700 people dead.

At the height of its power, ISIS was the richest terror organisation to have existed, with Iraqi National Intelligence estimating it had pillaged assets worth US$2 billion (S$2.7 billion) from captured territories. It was also believed to have sold petroleum from stolen oilfields to various buyers.

It ruled over its territory with an iron fist, enforcing a strict interpretation of syariah law that included public flogging and hangings for "offences" such as shaving of beards or failing to wear a veil. Women and girls were auctioned in bazaars as sex slaves, and minorities like Christians were taxed for following their religion.

ISIS even ran its own schools and government institutions. It tried to float its own currency, but much of the transactions that took place in the so-called caliphate were dollar-denominated.

Meanwhile, as the outside world became aware of its growing list of crimes against humanity, the calls for action began to mount.

The growing anger would prove to be the group's undoing. In September 2014, the US announced it would form a coalition against ISIS and began air strikes against the group in support of Iraqi government troops and moderate Syrian forces. The coalition was joined by Britain, France, Canada, Germany, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey, among other nations.

Besides air support, the coalition against ISIS also provided advisers to Iraqi forces and Syrian allies in the efforts to eradicate the group.

Things got even hotter for ISIS in September 2015 when Russia entered Syria's civil war on behalf of embattled President Bashar al-Assad. With the assistance of Iranian troops, Lebanon's Hizbollah on the ground and Russian fighters and bombers in the skies, the Syrian army made a ferocious comeback, not only against ISIS, but also other rebel groups in Syria.

The terror group proved to be resilient on the battlefield, using guerilla tactics and its deep pockets to strike back at the coalition and Syrian government forces. Often it would fall back in the face of a concerted push by anti-ISIS troops, only to make a counter-attack and recapture an area.

Among the tactics pioneered by ISIS in its counter-attacks was the use of easily available remote-control drones to conduct bombings.

It also mounted attacks on the soil of coalition countries. The first was a shooting at a museum in Belgium in May 2014 that left four people dead. When the attacker was apprehended, one of the items in his possession was a white sheet with ISIS' name emblazoned on it.

Over the next three years, there was a slew of overseas attacks inspired or guided by ISIS, such as the Paris attacks of November 2015 that left 130 people dead and the bombing a month before that of a Russian passenger jet flying from Egypt, which killed 224 people.

The siege of Marawi in the Philippines by ISIS-allied militants for months was another example of the long arm of the terror group. By the time the extremists were defeated after a five-month battle, large parts of the city had been reduced to rubble.

The terror group would claim credit even for attacks it was not directly involved in, such as the Bastille Day attack in Nice, which killed 86 and injured hundreds more, and a 2016 shooting at an Orlando nightclub that left 49 dead.

Meanwhile, the attacks in Iraq and Syria mounted in intensity, including a twin bombing in Baghdad in July 2016 that claimed 325 lives.

Despite a growing number of attacks, however, ISIS began to lose ground in the so-called caliphate with a string of battlefield losses. In this regard, local fighters from the region determined to wipe out a cruel enemy that had shown no mercy to even women and children played no small part.

When Iraqi forces recaptured the Grand Mosque in Mosul in June last year after an eight-month campaign, the militants blew up the tower from where Baghdadi had proclaimed the caliphate to prevent the mosque from falling into the government's hands. It was an act of desperation in the final days of the battle seemingly to reiterate the group's apocalyptic message.

Less than four months later, the caliphate was reduced to a few pockets facing a host of adversaries intent on its destruction. Then, even those last bastions were extinguished, and now ISIS' militants suddenly find themselves staring at the end of their proto-state.

Baghdadi, meanwhile, has vanished. His last audio message was made public in August last year, but he himself has not been seen since his speech at the Grand Mosque.

Still, experts warn that while ISIS no longer has territory, the group retains the ability to commit acts of terror across the world. While many of the group's militants surrendered to the advancing forces, the locals simply disappeared into the desert.

A question also arises over what to do with the captured militants, especially those from abroad. Many may seek to return to where they came from. Some may be already nursing thoughts of revenge.

The battlefield will shift from the devastated cities and towns of Iraq and Syria to an ideological plane. As an underground movement, ISIS still poses a danger as a beacon for radicalised individuals. And while the group is a greatly diminished force, the danger would be in tying the threat it poses to the physical territory it once held briefly.

arvindj@sph.com.sg

FACES OF TERROR

PHOTO: REUTERS

ABU BAKR AL-BAGHDADI
Very little is known about the self-proclaimed "caliph" of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), who is considered a global terrorist by the United States, European Union and United Nations. Following the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Baghdadi formed an Al-Qaeda-linked militant group, but was arrested in February 2004 by US forces near Fallujah and detained till December 2004, when he was released as a "low-level prisoner". As the leader of ISIS, he was responsible for masterminding a number of large-scale attacks, but remained under the radar until July 4, 2014, when he was seen in a video declaring an ISIS caliphate from the ramparts of the Great Mosque in Mosul in his only known public appearance. The US has offered a US$25 million (S$34 million) bounty for information or intelligence leading to Baghdadi's capture or death. There has been a number of reports on Baghdadi being killed by US or Russian-backed forces, but they are not verified and his whereabouts are currently unknown.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

'JIHADI JOHN'
Part of a four-member terror cell known as "The Beatles" for their English accents, "Jihadi John" frequently appeared in ISIS propaganda videos as an executioner who would address the camera before beheading his victims. His real name was Mohammed Emwazi, and he and his family had moved to the UK in 1994 when he was six. Emwazi got his nickname "John" from hostages he guarded while handling communications with their families. Emwazi was killed by a US air strike in Raqqa, Syria, in November 2015.

PHOTO: LONDON METROPOLITAN POLICE

SHAMIMA BEGUM
Begum and two other schoolmates ran away from Britain to Syria when she was 15 years old to be "jihadi brides". Despite an outcry and appeals to track down the schoolgirls, Begum and her friends made their way into Syria. Months later, Begum married Dutch terrorist Yago Riedijk, with whom she had two children. However, both children have since died and Begum was found in a refugee camp following the collapse of the caliphate. She has given birth to another child and says she wants to return home to the UK, but remains unrepentant about her association with ISIS.

Arvind Jayaram

Threat of Brexit delay hangs over British PM

May renews efforts for deal changes, says extension will merely postpone decision

SHARM EL-SHEIKH (Egypt) • Prime Minister Theresa May faces a growing threat that she will be forced to delay Brexit to avoid leaving the European Union without an agreement, a no-deal outcome described as "unacceptable" by one of the bloc's leaders.

With Britain's Brexit crisis going down to the wire, Mrs May is struggling to get the kind of changes from the EU she says she needs to get her divorce deal through a divided Parliament and smooth the country's biggest policy shift in more than 40 years.

The deadlock in Parliament has raised the prospect of Britain having to delay Brexit beyond March 29, something Mrs May is reluctant to do but which one official indicated could be an option if lawmakers refuse to pass her deal.

The official said ministers were "considering what to do if Parliament makes that decision", when asked about a possible extension.

But Mrs May has to tread carefully, with eurosceptics poised to leap on anything they see as an attempt to thwart Brexit.

In Egypt's Sharm el-Sheikh for an EU-Arab League summit, Mrs May met the bloc's leaders to try to win support for her efforts to make her deal more attractive to Parliament, where frustrated lawmakers are gearing up to try to wrest control of Brexit from the government.

Several of their plans would involve extending Article 50, which triggered the two-year Brexit negotiating period, delaying Britain's departure beyond March 29.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told the BBC: "We are sleep-walking into a no-deal scenario. It's unacceptable and your best friends have to warn you... Come to a conclusion and close the deal."

European Council chief Donald Tusk said an extension to the March 29 deadline would be a "rational solution" given political developments.

Mrs May has said that any delay would simply postpone a decision on how Britain leaves the EU, something she argues Parliament needs to address by March 12, when she has promised to bring back a vote on the divorce settlement.

"An extension to Article 50, a delay in this process, doesn't deliver a decision in Parliament, it doesn't deliver a deal," she said yesterday. "What it does is precisely what the word 'delay' says. It just delays the point at which you come to that decision," she added.

The EU has said it will consider an extension, but only if Britain can offer evidence that a delay would break the deadlock in Parliament, which voted down the deal last month in the biggest government defeat in modern British history. It has, however, so far rebuffed Mrs May's attempts to reopen the withdrawal agreement.

Mrs Theresa May speaking to the press during the European Union and Arab League summit at Sharm el-Sheikh on Sunday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

The European Commission said yesterday it was the EU's assumption that Britain would leave as planned on March 29.

Lawmakers in Mrs May's Conservative Party and those in the main opposition Labour Party are stepping up efforts to try to ensure she cannot take Britain out of the EU without a deal at a vote due tomorrow on the government's next steps.

Labour lawmaker Yvette Cooper, has called on Parliament to back her bid to seek to force the government to hand power to Parliament if no deal has been approved by March 13.

But there is another, perhaps more attractive, proposal to the government from two Conservatives, which would delay Brexit to May 23, the start of the European Parliament elections, if lawmakers have not approved a deal by March 12. A government official said the proposal could be considered "helpful".

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

33 years on, People Power revolt just a memory in Philippines

Raul Dancel
Philippines Correspondent
In Manila

Philippine military personnel at a flag-raising ceremony to commemorate the 33rd anniversary of the People Power movement in Manila yesterday. The 1986 revolt toppled dictator Ferdinand Marcos from power, sending his family into exile in Hawaii. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Thirty-three years is a long time to keep a legacy alive.

In the case of the popular "People Power" revolt in 1986 that ousted a brutal regime in the Philippines, the interlude has made it a cause for disappointment and a reminder of everything that has gone wrong in the country since then.

For those still clinging to it, the memory of the revolution needs to be invoked now more than ever to rein in an atypical leader's autocratic tendencies.

For those who would rather forget, People Power is a ghost that the government's loudest critics are using to return to power.

On Feb 22, 1986, the Philippines teetered on the brink of civil war after the defence minister and head of the national police mutinied against dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

With elite units loyal to them, they seized Manila's two largest military camps along Edsa, the main highway that cuts across metropolitan Manila.

For four days, the two sides wrestled to win over the military. What tipped the scale was a massive outpouring of civilians who thronged the streets and surrounded the mutineers inside their camps, holding back armoured columns sent to quash the rebellion with flowers and rosaries.

By the end of that stand-off, on Feb 25, Marcos and his family were in a United States military plane on their way to exile in Hawaii.

In the years that followed, the victory was cause for grand celebrations. Major roads were closed, giving way to three days of rallies, parades, concerts, speeches and re-enactments.

In recent years, however, the mood has radically shifted as the revolution failed to deliver on its grand promise of peace, freedom and prosperity for all.

Income inequality is wider than it has ever been. More than 26 million languish below the poverty line, and corruption continues to fester in the bureaucracy like cancer cells.

The popular opinion now is that only the very wealthy reaped the fruits of the 1986 revolution.

"Gone is the celebratory spirit. Today, there is hardly any expression of public recognition of the significance of those historic days," said Mr Randy David, a political commentator and professor at the University of the Philippines.

Frustration and resentment have thinned the multitude that once saw so much hope in the revolution.

In February 1986, more than two million people flooded Edsa to protect their revolution. Yesterday, fewer than 2,000 turned up at the People Power monument.

Still, these stragglers are drumming up the memory of People Power as they try to roll back a revisionist tide that is recasting Marcos as a victim rather than a perpetrator of unspeakable crimes.

The script has gained even more currency under President Rodrigo Duterte, who has anchored his political fate to an alliance with the late strongman's children.

Most of Mr Duterte's critics see him as the final repudiation of the revolt and a catalyst to a slide back into authoritarian rule. Civil rights activists have criticised him for the killing of more than 5,000 suspects in his brutal war on the narcotics trade. They see his declaration of martial law over Mindanao island as an experiment in iron-fisted rule.

"It seems we're going back to the ways of the regime we fought in the dark days of martial law," said former president Benigno Aquino, whose family was at the forefront of the anti-Marcos movement. The assassination of Mr Aquino's father eventually led to the 1986 revolt.

Mr Sergio Osmena, who is running for senator, spent five years in jail for opposing Marcos in the 1970s. He said Mr Duterte will "leave after he's through". "He just wants to finish what he said he would do, which is wipe out drugs... wipe out corruption."

For Mr David, People Power will remain a pivotal point in history, but it "has passed on".

"The sooner we recognise this, perhaps the easier it would be to understand – and hopefully move on – from where we are today."

rdancel@sph.com.sg

Suicide tips found spliced into YouTube videos for children

WASHINGTON • Dr Free Hess, a paediatrician and mother, had learnt about the chilling videos over the summer when another mum spotted one on YouTube Kids.

She said that minutes into the clip from a children's video game, a man appeared on the screen – giving instructions on how to commit suicide.

"I was shocked," Dr Hess said, noting that since then, the scene has been spliced into many more videos from the popular Nintendo game Splatoon on YouTube and YouTube Kids, a video app for children.

Dr Hess, from Ocala, Florida, has been blogging about the altered videos and working to get them taken down amid an outcry from parents and child health experts, who say such visuals can be damaging to children.

One on YouTube shows a man popping into the frame. "Remember, children," he begins, holding what appears to be an imaginary blade to the inside of his arm. "Sideways for attention. Longways for results."

"I think it's extremely dangerous for our children," Dr Hess said about the clips on Sunday in a phone interview with The Washington Post. "I think our children are facing a whole new world with social media and Internet access. It's changing the way they're growing, and it's changing the way they're developing."

A recent YouTube video viewed by The Post appears to include a spliced-in scene showing Internet personality Filthy Frank. It is unclear why he was edited into these clips, but his fans have been known to put him in memes and other videos.

HIGHLY DANGEROUS

I think it's extremely dangerous for our children... I think our children are facing a whole new world with social media and Internet access. It's changing the way they're growing, and it's changing the way they're developing.

DR FREE HESS, a paediatrician and mother, on the video clips.

Ms Andrea Faville, a spokesman for YouTube, said in a written statement that the company works to ensure that it is "not used to encourage dangerous behaviour and we have strict policies that prohibit videos which promote self-harm".

"We rely on both user flagging and smart detection technology to flag this content for our reviewers," Ms Faville added. "Every quarter, we remove millions of videos and channels that violate our policies and we remove the majority of these videos before they have any views."

The videos come amid mounting questions about how YouTube, the world's largest video-sharing platform, monitors and removes problematic content.

YouTube has long struggled with how to keep the platform free from such material – removing hateful and violent videos, banning dangerous pranks and cracking down on child sexual exploitation. YouTube said last month it was rebuilding its recommendation algorithm to prevent it from prompting videos that include conspiracy theories and other bogus information, though the videos would remain on the site.

Dr Nadine Kaslow, a past president of the American Psychological Association, told The Post that it is a "tragic" situation in which "trolls are targeting children and encouraging children to kill themselves".

Dr Kaslow, who teaches at Emory University's school of medicine, said that some children who are more vulnerable may be drawn to such grim content. WASHINGTON POST

Man wrongfully jailed for 38 years for murder to get $28m

LOS ANGELES • The southern California city of Simi Valley has reached a US$21 million (S$28 million) settlement with a man who spent more than 38 years wrongfully incarcerated in the brutal 1978 murders of a woman and her four-year-old son.

Mr Craig Coley, 71, was released from prison in 2017 after he was pardoned by then Governor Jerry Brown, who said that DNA evidence and a painstaking reinvestigation of the Simi Valley murders proved his innocence.

The state approved a separate, much smaller payout last year.

Mr Brown approved a US$1.95 million payment for Mr Coley – US$140 for each day he was wrongfully behind bars – that marked the largest payout by the state for an erroneous conviction.

The victims were discovered by a relative who grew concerned when Ms Rhonda Wicht, then 24, did not show up for a family get-together.

She had been strangled with a 3m-long macrame rope; her son, Donald, was smothered in his bed.

Mr Coley, who was going through a break-up with Ms Wicht, was held for questioning that day and ultimately charged with the two murders. He did not have a prior criminal record.

A key witness against Mr Coley was Ms Wicht's next-door neighbour, who said she heard banging noises and saw Mr Coley's truck parked outside the apartment complex on the morning of the murders.

In 1980, Mr Coley was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. But he always maintained his innocence.

In his claim for compensation and other court filings, his attorneys and prosecutors detailed troubling inconsistencies in the evidence against him.

Exactly 39 years after Ms Wicht's murder, detectives returned to the neighbour's apartment to peer out of her window.

There was no way, they concluded, that she could have seen from her window whoever was inside a truck parked outside.

But the most indisputable finding that officials said supported his innocence came when detectives located DNA evidence once thought destroyed.

A piece of Ms Wicht's bedsheet used on the night she died contained another man's sperm, along with a man's epithelial cells. Mr Coley's DNA was not found.

Mr Coley's attorney, Mr Ron Kaye, said the settlement offers some closure and vindication for his client, though no amount of money can compensate him for the life he missed while imprisoned. DPA

Mr Craig Coley, 71, was released from prison in 2017 after being wrongly convicted for the murders of a woman and her four-year-old son in 1978.

OPINION

THE STRAITS TIMES

Ng Yat Chung SPH Chief Executive Officer
Anthony Tan Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Ignatius Low Chief Marketing Officer
Glen Francis Chief Technology Officer
Chua Wee Phong Executive Vice-President (Circulation)

Warren Fernandez Editor-in-Chief (English/Malay/Tamil Media Group) and The Straits Times Editor
Sumiko Tan The Straits Times Executive Editor
Dominic Nathan Managing Editor (English/Malay/Tamil Media Group)
Helen Chia, Paul Jacob, Rahul Pathak, Lim Chuan Huat, Ravi Velloor, Vikram Khanna Associate Editors
Paul Cheong Night Editor
Ong Hwee Hwee Digital Editor

Zakir Hussain News Editor
Abdul Hafiz Associate News Editor and Sunday Editor
Li Xueying Enterprise Editor
Kor Kian Beng Defence and Security Editor
Jeremy Au Yong Foreign Editor
Susan Long Lifestyle Editor
Lee Yulin Sports Editor
Chua Mui Hoong, Audrey Quek Opinion Editors
Peter Williams Art Editor
Stephanie Yeow Photo Editor
Mathew Pereira Forum Editor

The Straits Times says

Reducing reliance on foreign workers

Last week's Budget sent a clear message that Singapore is serious about reducing its reliance on foreign workers. The Dependency Ratio Ceiling, or the proportion of foreigners on work permits or S Passes whom a firm can employ, will be cut from 40 per cent to 38 per cent on Jan 1 next year, and to 35 per cent on Jan 1, 2021. The quota for S Pass workers – mid-skilled foreigners paid at least $2,300 a month – will drop from 15 per cent to 13 per cent on Jan 1 next year, and to 10 per cent on Jan 1, 2021. The timeline for implementation of the new quotas gives companies an opportunity to prepare for the change, but change they must, particularly because it has been six years since the last tightening of the foreign worker quota in the service sector.

The move on the foreign worker front reflects a wider preoccupation with the management of manpower growth. Relying on greater numbers of foreign workers will not save companies from the inexorable logic of tapering workforce growth. Instead, they must use the time that they have to upgrade Singaporean workers – the core of the economy – as part of perpetual corporate restructuring. Foreign workers cannot be the answer to the inadequacies of managing local workers. If corporate management functions well, foreigners will complement locals. Amendments to the regulatory structure seek to ensure a balance of complementarity.

Admittedly, the service sector is not uniform. While greater adoption of technology is the general answer to meeting manpower shortage, particular segments of the sector have specific and pressing needs. As observers have noted, in getting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to adopt technology, it has to also be remembered that more than 60 per cent of SMEs are micro enterprises – those with less than $1 million in annual revenue. Their size restricts their room for manoeuvre. What is affordable for a medium or large enterprise could be extremely demanding for a micro enterprise. Such companies need economic space in which to find the time to innovate, seek new directions, and grow.

Yet, SMEs, including micro enterprises, must not forget that they are a part of the same economy that includes firms in the manufacturing sector, for example. The efficiency in that sector needs to be emulated by segments in services such as retail and food and beverage, which currently remain very labour-intensive. Here, Singaporeans could play a useful part by internalising a culture of efficiency and self-service that reduces the need for human labour. From not expecting a fresh plate for each and every course of a meal at a restaurant, to clearing their own dishes after meals at a hawker centre, there are individually small but collectively significant ways of doing more with less in a labour-starved economy.

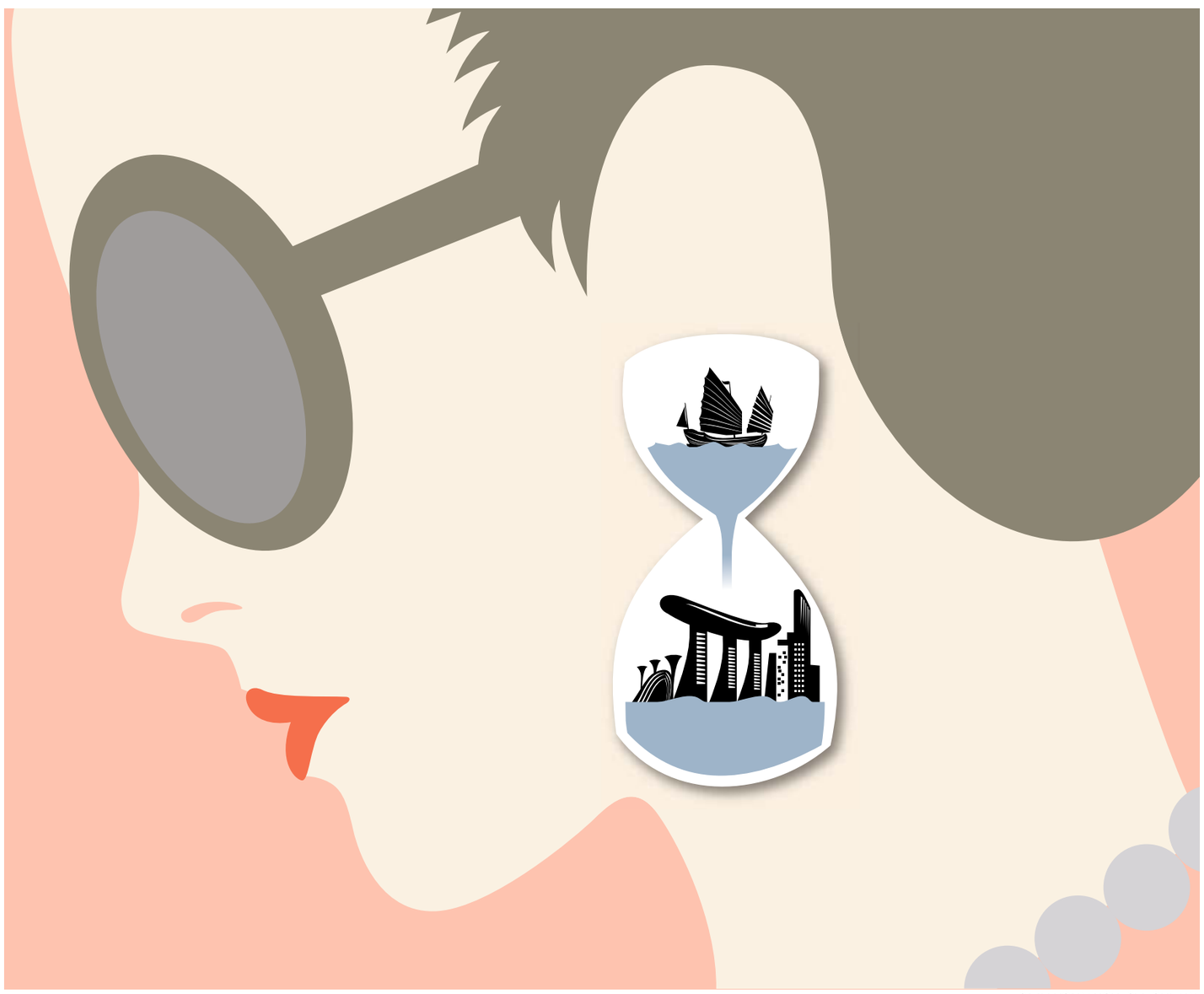
ByInvitation

Crazy Rich Asians in early Singapore's history

Long before the movie was made and before the Europeans came to Singapore, Asians were making the island a hub for trade, money and ideas. Examples were Teochew rice merchants and Chettiar moneylenders.

Tan Tai Yong

For The Straits Times



ST ILLUSTRATION: CEL GULAPA

In the eighth century, long before Europeans arrived in our part of the world, Crazy Rich Asians were already building great maritime cities.

Singapore was destined to be one of them.

Persian and Arab merchants operated the trading networks that connected the Chinese ports with the Indian Ocean. During the Tang period, there was export of silk, cloth, ceramics, tea, copper and iron wares from China to West Asia. As the axis connecting East Asia and the classical centres of India and the Middle East, South-east Asia remained an important trading region throughout the Song Dynasty.

By the 13th century, long-distance East-West trade was conducted through an efficient segmentation of networks – the Arabian Seas, the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea.

Professor Anthony Reid, who taught history at the University of Malaya in the 1960s, and later returned to be the founding director of the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore, points out that the build-up of trade networks led to a "great expansion of cities and... gave them life". He further argues that in South-east Asia, before 1630, "maritime cities were probably more dominant over their sparsely populated hinterlands than they were in most parts of the world".

By the 19th century, when the Europeans arrived in Singapore to build a colonial port city, these flows and circulations formed the foundations on which new structures grew.

After Singapore was established as a trading colony by the British, it continued to function as a node of overlapping diasporic worlds and their networks. By the end of the 19th century, the island was an established hub of trade, pilgrimage and knowledge production.

Singapore experienced the forces of globalisation long before the term came into popular consciousness in the late 20th century, with a global orientation and purpose.

But beyond goods and communities, Singapore traded in money and ideas.

GLOBAL FINANCE AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

By the mid-1800s, Singapore was, as historian Rajat Kanta Ray describes, "the centre of a dense web of Chinese finance and trade".

A thick stream of Chinese migration to Singapore and Malaya led to burgeoning demand for rice in the region.

The lucrative trade in rice was dominated by Teochew rice merchants who were based in Singapore, but who were also known as Siam traders because of the large rice mills in Bangkok. The most prominent among the Siam traders was Choy Tsz Yong, who arrived in Singapore in the 1870s.

Back in his native Swatow, Choy was a successful sugar merchant and a commission agent. Seeing an opportunity in the new trade in rice shipments, the Teochew merchant came to Singapore with a substantial amount of capital. By 1908, Choy was the head of the local Teochew clan, and he owned four rice mills in Siam, which produced over 10 million dollars' worth of rice.

Teochews are still very much involved in the rice business today. Chop Chiap Heng, one of Singapore's largest rice importers, is run by a Teochew father-and-son team – Mr Tan Oon Meng and Mr Andrew Tan.

Mr Andrew Tan had been the chairman of the Singapore General Rice Importers Association during the 2008 food crisis, which was caused by a combination of severe weather, growing demand for biofuels, rising oil prices and panic buying. Global rice prices increased by about 40 per cent. Of the two key suppliers to Singapore, Vietnam banned rice exports while India lowered its exports.

It was at the time that Mr Tan met the former Thai commerce minister, together with major Thai rice exporters and Singapore rice importers. The Thai minister reaffirmed the strong relationship between the two countries and Thailand continued to supply rice to Singapore throughout that testing period.

Meanwhile, the Chettiars were operating a global financial centre on this little island.

The Nattukottai Chettiars, who originated from an area known as Chettinad in Tamil Nadu, India, had dominated the rural credit sector in many parts of South-east Asia. In the 19th century, Chettiar temples were important nodes of this network. More than religious sites, the temples served as clearing houses and places of business, as cashiers from Chettiar firms congregated at the temple to transact with their clients. It was also the meeting place for the Chettiar Chamber of Commerce.

As devotees of Murugan, the Hindu god of war, Chettiar moneylenders would invoke the deity as chairman and witness to all economic transactions. Unfair dealings constituted sacrilege. This provided a unified, ethical code of conduct for business, in contrast to opportunistic behaviour among other merchant communities that operated across vast distances.

Trust, rather than money, was the foundation of the Chettiars' international business.

The Chettiars provided a ready source of credit for small businesses, which would otherwise have found it difficult to secure loans from European banks, and they counted as their clients Indian traders, Chinese miners and businessmen, European planters, Malay royalty and civil servants.

In fact, in Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia, many a successful Chinese merchant began his climb from a loan from a Chettiar. Over time and with stricter legislation, the role of moneylending declined as the Chettiars entered other professions. By the early 1980s, there were only a handful of surviving Chettiar moneylending firms in Singapore, operating mainly in the Serangoon Road area.

My second example is Singapore's role as a knowledge production node. The flows and networks that ensured Singapore's strategic and economic position as a colonial port-city also gave it a place in the world of ideas.

Colonial port cities, being diverse and metropolitan, provided public spheres, which allowed elites and literate classes to communicate and debate with one another.

Take, for example, Malay publications such as newspapers, magazines and literature. The dissemination of these materials, and the accompanying spread of ideas, was stimulated by the advent of the Malay lithograph and, subsequently, the printing press, with the main distribution and publication centre situated in Singapore.

In fact, Singapore was a centre for Islamic life, learning and literature in the Malay-Muslim world in the late 19th century.

PLURAL OR COSMOPOLITAN?

Early Singapore then was both a plural and cosmopolitan city. What are the key features of plurality versus cosmopolitanism? A plural society, as described by British writer John Sydenham Furnivall, is one that is segregated, with groups that live "side by side, yet without mingling". Touch but don't mix – a plural society would not share common values and social bonds.

In contrast, a cosmopolitan society is one where there is intermingling among different groups, and individuals look beyond national boundaries in building cultural, political and economic connections.

Globalising cities tended to foster cosmopolitanism – in other words, openness derived from divergent cultural experiences. However, cities and their societies are fluid and evolve over time. Singapore was at times more plural than cosmopolitan, sometimes both simultaneously.

People came to Singapore, often just passing through, on their way to, or from, their intended destinations, yet settled down here. Singapore was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Asia by the end of the 19th century.

But where do we stand today?

After decades of efforts in nation-building and the promotion of racial harmony within the CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others) framework, do we risk developing a much more impoverished and narrow concept of what Singapore and Singaporeans are? As a form of "state simplification", the CMIO framework might have been necessary in undergirding social policies during the early years of state building. However, the continued use of this rigid form of categorisation to pigeonhole people according to race can submerge the rich diversities, cultural fluidity and multi-layered identities of contemporary Singapore.

As a globalised Singapore becomes more of the polyglot cosmopolis that it was once, does the CMIO still serve its purpose? This is a question we ought to ponder as we attempt to strengthen our sense of identity.

Even as we write and make our national history, we should take into account our much longer and richer past, where we were a point of convergence for people from all over the world – a place that afforded them opportunities, vitality, interactions and cross-cultural encounters, and out of which grew a diverse, tolerant, multicultural population that went on to define modern Singapore.

We were that place in the past. We could be again, in the future.

stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Professor Tan Tai Yong, a historian, is President, Yale-NUS College and 6th S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore.

Work together to help disabled people find jobs

Too few persons with disabilities are in employment. Even if a quota is not deemed a good solution, there are other ways tripartite partners and disabled people can work together to raise their employment rate.

Cassandra Chiu

For The Straits Times

A few mornings ago, as I scrolled through the articles in The Straits Times app on my mobile phone, my heart skipped a beat as the robotic Voice Over – a text-to-speech application – read out an article on the employment figures of persons with disabilities (PWD) here.

The little voice in my head said: "Yes, finally we will get a clearer picture of employment rates for the disabled in Singapore."

It did not matter that the approximate 5 per cent employment rate for PWD appeared dismal. I am very grateful that some spotlight is illuminating the issue of providing a livelihood for the disabled. This is an issue close to my heart as an advocate for equal opportunities and also as a blind person.

But my heart sank as my fingers touched the lines of another article, which read out that the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) felt that a quota system for employing the disabled would not work in the Singapore context.

As I got my daughter ready for school and prepared myself for work, thoughts swirled around in my head.

I felt so lucky to be one of the 8,600 disabled individuals whom the MSF reported as having some form of work, in the parliamentary response to Nominated MP Anthea Ong's question on the employment situation of PWD.

But if so few disabled people find work, what will happen in the coming years to the growing number of better-educated PWD – surely, there will be an increase with this year's implementation of compulsory education for children with disabilities? And what about Singapore's rapidly greying population? According to the National Council of Social Service in 2015, the estimated prevalence rate of disability for those aged above 50 is 13.3 per cent.

Now, I'm sure all, or nearly all, say, 95 per cent, of working-age individuals who are disabled would not be too happy with the bleak employment prospects.

Roughly 5 per cent of PWD who were hired is 8,600 people, so 1 per cent is 1,720 and 95 per cent would mean 163,400 individuals.

Surely something can and must be done? If there are over 160,000 people who would like to work but face obstacles, surely there is an urgent need to remove those barriers to employment?

The issue of employment prospects is a significant one for the overall economy when it affects such a large group. It isn't only about including the disabled, but also their caregivers' availability for economic participation. Without a livelihood, these people collectively are a financial strain on the family and society.

Later in the day, I was inundated with notifications on social media from friends sharing their views on the two articles. There was a lot of finger-pointing and bickering on which solution was best. And, of course, I joined in the discussion.

Yes, the news is earth-shaking for the PWD community and there are many nuances to the issue of increasing its employment rate.

As I reflected more on this, my original disappointment that the quota system would not work in Singapore dissipated and I saw that the MSF was right.

Two years ago, I was invited to speak at a conference on raising the employment rate of PWD in Myanmar. It was organised by the International Labour Organisation and Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business.

The quota system was naturally discussed, as many countries around the world use it to encourage an increase in the employment rate of PWD.

There is no doubt that there are limitations and downsides to the quota system, such as the concerns of labour market inflexibility voiced by the ministry. However, my biggest takeaway from that conference was the way the stakeholders – from businesses and trade unions, to disability organisations and the government – came together to brainstorm how to tackle discrimination and promote employment.

There was genuine interest from all sides to listen to the concerns, fears and restrictions of all involved.

Government officials, people from business and disabled leaders were working towards a common goal of how best to get more PWD employed.

At that time, Myanmar had just passed a law safeguarding the rights of persons with disabilities and everyone was keen to comply with the new provisions.

THE SINGAPORE CONTEXT

Of course, what works in Myanmar may not work in Singapore's economic landscape.

I cannot speak for the many different disabled people and their varied needs, nor for the concerns of the other stakeholders such as employers, businesses and the different ministries.

However, my view is that what has been working for Singapore may offer a unique perspective on how to raise the employment rate of disabled people.

Singapore has been an economic powerhouse despite its relatively tiny size. Its tax policies allow businesses to maximise profits and its educational system churns out highly skilled employees.

However, Singapore's key competitive advantage when it comes to the economy is the tripartite collaboration between the Ministry of Manpower, the National Trades Union Congress and the Singapore National Employers Federation.

Together, they find solutions and shape policies that effectively respond to emerging trends as they do not overprotect any of the stakeholders, but seek an equilibrium that is workable for all involved.

I imagine that a roundtable discussion between the unions, employers and Government, with inputs from the fourth stakeholder – disabled individuals who have experiences seeking a livelihood – can lead to a better understanding and the co-creation of possible solutions to the complex challenge of increasing the economic participation of PWD.

What are some solutions that can be explored? Here are some ideas.

One is for the four stakeholders to set up an Employable Skill Development Academy. It could conduct courses for PWD to train and upgrade skills relevant to the economy. This would be for both job seekers as well as those who are already employed.

A further undertaking could be to develop an ability-based appraisal system to ensure employees with disabilities are not unfairly compensated; it would be unrealistic to judge performance based on a standard key performance indicator if no suitable adjustments have been made to the scope of work.

Willing business stakeholders in this consortium could offer to facilitate early internship opportunities for students with disabilities, starting from secondary-school level.

They can also pledge to provide a certain number of permanent jobs. In time to come, more businesses will have the confidence to follow this example. If they are unable to get businesses to enrol in this scheme, then the inclusive efforts that advocates have campaigned for over the last 1½ decade would be for nothing.

The social service sector alone cannot resolve the lack of jobs for more than 160,000 PWD. It is a sizeable crisis that requires the partnership of many stakeholders if we are intent on finding a solution.

In any case, the working landscape is rapidly changing with the rise of artificial intelligence, robotics and the development of the so-called gig economy – and the demand for traditional employees may indeed be decreasing.

Persons with disabilities can be productive in the disruption economy. An example is the way soldiers with autism in the Israeli Defence Force use their attention to detail and hyperfocus to analyse visual data such as satellite photos before military missions.

The rise of digital technologies also reduces the need for workers to be physically present at workplaces, removing barriers for those with mobility issues.

Conventional solutions to the issue of employment for a sizeable segment of the population will no longer work. We need new solutions that can keep up with the evolving times for Singapore to maintain its economic edge.

Help us to help ourselves – let's co-create a workable solution into the future of work.

stopinion@sph.com.sg

• Cassandra Chiu is a psychotherapist and lecturer, and an advocate for persons with disabilities. Her creative non-fiction book, A Place For Us: Conversations On Seeing, will be published by Ethos Books next month.

Bangladesh v India in the development race

Noah Smith

A worker sunning fabric at a dye factory in Bangladesh. In 2017, Bangladesh was the world's second-largest apparel supplier after China, with 6.5 per cent of the market. But its growth is threatened by automation, which is making textile manufacturing less labour-intensive, says the writer. PHOTO: REUTERS

There is an old theory that as an organism develops, it progresses through the same evolutionary stages travelled by its ancestors. Traditionally, economic development has worked in a similar way.

When a country first shifts from agrarian poverty to industrialisation, it tends to start out in light manufacturing, especially textiles. Later it masters more complex manufactured products, and finally it progresses to inventing its own cutting-edge technology.

Thus, each country's development tends to look a bit like that of nations that already went through the process. That certainly seems to describe the experience of South Korea and Taiwan, which reached developed status relatively recently. It is also the path being followed by China. As these economies got richer and their wages rose, low-tech, labour-intensive manufacturing industries tended to migrate to countries with cheaper workers.

Recently, one of the biggest beneficiaries of this process has been Bangladesh. The garment industry accounts for more than 80 per cent of the South Asian nation's export revenue, and about a fifth of its gross domestic product (GDP).

In 2017, Bangladesh was the world's second-largest apparel supplier after China, with 6.5 per cent of the market, outpacing neighbouring India despite the latter's much larger economy.

This economic development path has no doubt come at a real human and social cost – Bangladesh's workers suffer harsh working conditions and many industrial accidents, including a horrific factory collapse in 2013 that killed more than a thousand people.

But overall, the tried-and-true industrialisation strategy seems to be working. Real GDP per capita has doubled since the turn of the century, and Bangladesh appears to be on a similar exponential growth path as its neighbour India.

India, meanwhile, has generally underperformed in manufacturing. The country does have a few bright spots – for example, it's now the world's sixth-biggest auto manufacturer, with an immense factory cluster in Gujarat, and has been increasing its production of smartphones.

But overall, manufacturing has declined as a share of the economy: This is not to say that India's leaders have ignored manufacturing – indeed, they have long called for a big effort to industrialise. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has courted foreign manufacturers, but so far the effect has been limited.

Most observers agree that a lack of infrastructure and an excess of regulatory red tape are the reason India remains a difficult place to make things.

Despite its struggles in manufacturing, however, India is growing rapidly – even faster than Bangladesh, in most years. The reason has been growth in service industries. India's famous outsourcing companies are just the tip of the iceberg – software, finance, online services, tourism, logistics, media, healthcare, and other services have been the biggest driver of India's impressive growth.

Some have suggested that India has discovered a development model that could leapfrog manufacturing entirely, going straight from agrarian poverty to a post-industrial economy. Others are more sceptical.

This all leads to a very important question. Will Bangladesh, with its traditional approach to growth, catch up and overtake India? Or has India stumbled upon a new development model that cuts out the need for a country to do a stint as the workshop of the world?

This is a crucial question because as technology advances, there's a concern that the traditional path out of poverty might be closing.

Automation is making textile manufacturing less labour-intensive. For one thing, that means poor countries might no longer be able to create mass urban employment in the garment industry. But even more troubling, it might cause the industry to migrate back to rich countries like the United States, where labour is expensive but capital is relatively cheap. Some of this reverse migration might already be happening. In other words, the developing world is at risk of premature deindustrialisation.

If Bangladesh fails due to competition from rich-world robots, it will bode ill for countries such as Ethiopia that are looking to hop on the escalator to prosperity. That would leave India's service-centric development model as the only feasible path.

Some economists argue that automation has not closed off the traditional path, and that there is still plenty of work for industrious people in poor countries. Bangladesh, meanwhile, is scrambling to diversify into more valuable manufacturing industries such as autos and electronics.

So although the leaders of Bangladesh and India have similar goals, the difference in the countries' development models is making for an interesting experiment.

Countries in Africa hoping to follow these two South Asian giants' growth trajectories should be watching keenly. If Bangladesh grows faster, it will suggest that manufacturing, starting with textiles, is still the ticket to industrialisation; but if Bangladesh falters and India sustains its growth, it will imply that poor countries should look to services. BLOOMBERG

Don't abolish billionaires

Can there be morally appropriate tycoons in an age of growing income inequality?

Will Wilkinson

Billionaires are in notably bad odour with many people on the left. Socialists have long held that large stores of private wealth are tantamount to violence against those in need. But regular non-radical folks not on the left are fed up too.

Former Starbucks boss Howard Schultz's potential independent White House bid is simply infuriating, and it's maddening to feel helplessly tangled in the gilded web of global intrigue emanating from the US President, his plutocrat dictator pals, and America's retail overlord Jeff Bezos.

Thanks at least in part to Mr Bernie Sanders and the sizzling rise of Ms Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, this dry wick has met a spark. Enthusiasm for radical levelling is whistling out of the hard-left fringe and blossoming into a mainstream mood. Ms Ocasio-Cortez's policy adviser, Mr Dan Riffle, contends that "every billionaire is a policy failure" because "the acquisition of that much wealth has bad consequences" and "a moral society needs guard rails against it".

He would like to see the 2020 Democratic primary contenders answer a question: "Can it be morally appropriate for anyone to be a billionaire?"

It is a compelling litmus test. I'd also like to watch would-be Democratic nominees take it.

However, I hope that they would stick up for the idea that it can be morally kosher to bank a billion and that the existence of virtuous three-comma fortunes is a sign not of failure but of supreme policy success.

The empirical record is quite clear about the general form of national political economy that produces the happiest, healthiest, wealthiest, freest and longest lives. There's no pithy name for it, so we'll have to settle for "liberal-democratic welfare-state capitalism".

There's a "social democratic" version, which is what you get in countries such as Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands. And there's a "neo-liberal" (usually English-speaking) version, which is what you get in countries such as Canada, New Zealand and the United States.

You may prefer one version over the other, but they are not all that different. And in comparative terms, they are all insanely great. The typical citizen of these countries is as well-off as human beings have ever been. These places are the historical pinnacle of policy success. But guess what? There are billionaires in all of them.

Egalitarian Sweden, an object of ardent progressive adoration, has more billionaires per capita than the United States. So what's the problem?

The progressive idea here is usually that people with vastly more wealth than the common run of citizens wield vastly disproportionate political power and therefore imperil democracy and the equal worth of our basic rights.

It's a worry we've got to take seriously, but it's based more in abstract theorising than empirical analysis.

Inspect any credible international ranking of countries by democratic quality, equal treatment under the law or level of personal freedom. You will find the same passel of billionaire-tolerant states again and again.

If there are billionaires in all the places where people flourish best, why think getting rid of them will make things go better?

MORAL DIFFERENCE

It can be tempting to think that there's no morally decent way to accumulate that much wealth. And it's true that scads of the filthy rich got that way through theft, exploitation and the subtler corruption of anti-competitive rules in politically rigged markets.

But there's a big moral difference between positive-sum wealth production and zero-sum wealth extraction – a difference that corresponds to a rough-and-ready distinction between the deserving and undeserving rich.

The distinction is sound because there's a proven way to make a moral killing: improve a huge number of other people's lives while capturing a tiny slice of the surplus value.

Consider Dr Gary Michelson, a spinal surgeon and inventor worth an estimated US$1.8 billion (S$2.4 billion). He lives in Los Angeles. Dr Michelson holds hundreds of patents on medical devices and procedures that have made spinal surgery more effective. He got rich by making it so that people with spinal injuries could walk again or suffer less debilitating pain.

According to Dr William Nordhaus, the Nobel Memorial Prize-winning economist, innovators capture about 2 per cent of the economic value they create. The rest of it accrues to consumers. Whatever that is, it's not a raw deal.

The accumulation of these innovations over time is the mechanism that drives compounding economic growth, which accounts for a vast improvement over the past 100 years in the typical American standard of living.

Some people may have made an ungodly sum in the course of helping make this humanitarian miracle happen, but that's okay. This isn't to say that the deserving rich deserve every penny they get. In a better world, billionaires like Dr Michelson would probably have less.

Policy failure is rife, and it's bound to account for a portion of even the best-deserved fortunes. Patents, for example, are government-granted monopolies meant to incentivise innovation. But the evidence suggests we've overshot the mark, and the pace of innovation would quicken, and many of America's biggest fortunes would shrink, if patent protections were weakened.

Along similar lines, few of us object to J.K. Rowling making a mint entertaining billions of kids (and adults), but much of her net worth is because of merchandising profits built on unjustifiably ironclad intellectual property rights, which have deprived billions of the joys of knock-off Harry Potter toys and stories.

FIXING POLICY FAILURES

Nearly every real-world market is defined to some extent by rules that limit competition, concentrate wealth and leave the rest of us poorer than we might have been. A small number of people have too much housing wealth because we've made it too hard to build.

Financial innovation makes new markets and improves the allocation of resources, but Wall Street tycoons also reap huge rewards from winning wasteful arbitrage arms races, skimming off transactions and nickel-and-diming consumers with inscrutable fees. Fixing these policy failures might create a system that produces fewer billionaires. But that shouldn't be the point.

It might also produce more morally worthy 10-figure fortunes. That's great, because we should be aiming to channel entrepreneurial energy into productive wealth creation that lifts us all up and away from the extraction of wealth through unjust rules that close off opportunity and deprive us of the blessings of innovation.

There is a possible America where routes to extractive wealth have been closed and barriers to productive wealth have been cleared; where the wealthiest have somewhat less, and the rest have a great deal more. In this America, the economy and democracy are more equitable and less corrupt, and the least well-off fare better than ever. People should dearly want to live there, in a place where, if you can manage to become one, it's more than "morally appropriate" to be a billionaire.

NYTIMES

A resident in North Miami clearing debris after Hurricane Irma in September 2017. It was one of the costliest storms in US history, leaving a US$50 billion trail of destruction. Two months later, Miami voters approved the US$400 million Miami Forever Bond to build resilience against flooding and storm surges.
PHOTO: NYTIMES

How Miami builds resilience against climate change

Amid the growing threat to the world's coastal cities, Miami's residents voted to tax themselves to fund projects against flooding and storm surges.

Ban Ki-Moon and Francis Suarez

Climate change is not a distant threat for Miami; it's a daily presence in people's lives. The city has been fighting to stay above water for decades.

It knows that its future as a vibrant international hub for business, tourism, arts and culture depends on making the city more resilient to the impact of global warming. That is why the city of Miami is moving aggressively to adapt. In 2017, its citizens voted to tax themselves to build resilience against flooding and storm surges by approving a US$400 million (S$540 million) bond issue that is financing projects across the city.

Miami is not alone, of course, in facing these threats. Around the globe, some 800 million people in hundreds of coastal cities are at risk from storm surges and rising seas. We want to share what we have learnt in building resilience against the changing climate.

One reality we have come to understand is this: Our efforts to protect coastal cities will fall short of what will be required in the decades to come.

For in spite of global efforts to rein in carbon dioxide emissions that cause global warming, they continue to rise and expose coastal cities like Miami to more extreme weather events and rising seas.

And yet, the world's biggest economies invested only about US$25 billion on adaptation overall in 2014, despite losing many times that amount to floods, storms, wildfires and droughts.

Clearly, more investment is needed to build resilience, especially to protect the world's coastal regions and cities.

We have also learnt that there is strength in numbers. Miami can access a wealth of resources, including sea level rise projections, thanks to its membership in regional bodies like the South-east Florida Regional Climate Change Compact.

The city has also gained a broader perspective on urban resilience challenges and approaches by joining global networks such as the Global Commission on Adaptation, where we both serve as board members, and 100 Resilient Cities.

Finally, we have learnt that effective adaptation is a collective endeavour. It requires a holistic, long-term approach that takes into account the needs of our citizens today and in the future. This requires robust and meticulous long-term planning, informed investment in resilient infrastructure, adapting land use and building policies to address the climate challenge, advancing new transportation solutions, educating and informing citizens about climate change, training and mobilising volunteers during emergencies, informing private property owners of climate risks, and forging partnerships with research institutions and business innovators.

As this long list makes clear, there isn't a single aspect of our daily lives that isn't affected by climate change. Perhaps one of the reasons there is so little investment in adaptation is the lack of financial incentives.

Unlike a wind farm, for example, that can earn a steady return for investors, the monetary benefits of adaptation are less straightforward. Investing in resilience protects businesses and communities from devastating losses, so it must be measured in the lives saved and businesses that remain open.

We are only now learning how to quantify these benefits to communities. Florida's Division of Emergency Management, for example, calculated that projects to reduce wind and water damage avoided US$81 million in losses when Hurricane Matthew struck in 2016, while costing only US$19 million to carry out.

The projects included raising buildings, improving drainage, and buying and demolishing properties in vulnerable areas. That is why leadership, particularly from city governments like Miami's, is so important in driving investment in adaptation.

After Hurricane Irma in September 2017 – one of the costliest in US history, leaving a US$50 billion trail of destruction – there was both a moral and a fiscal obligation to act.

That is why two months later, Miami voters approved the US$400 million Miami Forever Bond. The programme is the city's answer to the shortfall of investment in adaptation. It brings together city planners, private sector innovators and citizens to build a stronger, more resilient future for Miami.

Almost half this amount is being invested in flood defences and other measures to combat the effects of rising sea levels. The remaining funds will be invested in affordable housing, tree planting, road works and an innovative approach to urban landscape design that will allow residents to continue enjoying waterfront access while improving drainage and sea wall defences.

On Feb 19, we had the opportunity to visit resilience projects financed by the bond in the heart of Miami's Brickell financial district. They include expanding drainage capacity to reduce flooding and new pumping stations to collect storm water run-off and discharge it into the Miami River and Biscayne Bay.

In addition, a project along Brickell Bay Drive will raise the elevation of nearly 2.5km of sea wall on Biscayne Bay to prevent flooding from storm surges, and a redesign of Jose Marti Park along the Miami River will reduce flood risk.

We hope that along with these projects, Miami's resilience bond will become a catalyst for greater private sector investment and innovation in climate adaptation. We also hope it will spur similar initiatives in coastal cities around the globe. NYTIMES

• Ban Ki-moon, a former secretary-general of the United Nations, is a co-chairman of the Global Commission on Adaptation. Francis Suarez is the Mayor of Miami.

BIG PICTURE

WEATHER
Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 34 deg C **Low** 24 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 52 to 54 (Moderate)

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Glitzy parade fit for a king

Hundreds of thousands of spectators turned up to see the king's float wind its way down the streets of Nice, France, on Sunday to mark the start of the Nice Carnival.

The festivities are taking place in the south-eastern French city until Saturday.

The glitzy event is known as one of the most famous carnivals in the world, alongside the Rio de Janeiro and Venice parades. This year's event featured floats with effigies of United States President Donald Trump, Russian President Vladimir Putin and even disgraced American film producer Harvey Weinstein.

STAGE PROGRAMME

TIME	25 FEB 2019 (Monday)	26 FEB 2019 (Tuesday)	27 FEB 2019 (Wednesday)
11.00pm to 12.00pm		NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd
12.00pm to 1.00pm	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Care for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Care for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness	Increase Profitability and Productivity with Microneedling, Plasma and Clinical Module Care for Professionals by Meijo Skincare Wellness
1.00pm to 2.00pm	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	DR. HOU & LING Double Extracts Diamond White Essence by Jing Rui Biotechnology - Cai En International Ltd
2.00pm to 3.00pm	The Most Advanced Reproduction Beauty in Japan by Beauty Planning Inc.	TOKI SKIN: The Japanese Way to Naturally Beautiful, Porcelain Skin by Lit Botanica Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd
3.00pm to 4.00pm	Miraculous Non Surgical Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	DR. HOU & LING LIPOFORM Bust Plus Lotion by Jing Rui Biotechnology - Cai En International Ltd	Your Skills Your Future: Latest Government Subsidy Beauty Courses 2019 by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd
4.00pm to 5.00pm	NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd	The Myth of Japanese Cosmetics, 'NAHLS' by Deep Impact Co., Ltd.	NR Nobel™: An Innovative Breakthrough in the Field of Life Extension and Longevity in Cosmetics by AVIV International Pte Ltd
5.00pm to 6.00pm	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Miraculous Non Surgical Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	Self-Defence Power - Our Body's Inherent Ability to Heal by Nature Produce
6.00pm to 7.00pm	Self-Defence Power - Our Body's Inherent Ability to Heal by Nature Produce	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

TIME	25 FEB 2019 (Monday)	26 FEB 2019 (Tuesday)	27 FEB 2019 (Wednesday)
11.30pm to 12.30pm	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd		
12.30pm to 1.30pm	7 Minutes Miracle Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	7 Minutes Miracle Face Lift by FABLife Pte Ltd	
1.30pm to 2.30pm	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd	Nano Hair Restoration by H-Plus (S) Pte Ltd
2.30pm to 3.30pm	The Best Body Contouring Tech of Both Worlds: NobleShape with LLD+AMF+RF by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd	Add a Whole New Dimension to your Aesthetic Treatment Plan! AGASSI - The Latest RF Smile Lifting & Vaginal Tightening Concept! by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd	Bio-Jet – The Next Generation of Needle-Free Transdermal Drug Delivery Concept by Aesthetics Marketing Asia Pte Ltd
3.30pm to 4.30pm	2 Weeks to Brighter, Even and Younger Looking Skin with the Power of Po3™. The Light Serum by 28Cubed by NamZ Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd	3D Aesthetics Solutions via AI Technology by HRS Technology Pte Ltd
4.30pm to 5.30pm		5 Most Effective Meridian Point for Natural Face Lifting by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd	5 Most Effective Meridian Point for Natural Face Lifting by SOQ Biz Hub Pte Ltd

Visitors are encouraged to pre-register at our website **www.beautyasia.com.sg**

Important Note: • The Exhibition is strictly open only to trade, professionals and business visitors from the beauty and wellness industry by invitation and business card registration only. • For safety reasons, children below the age of 16 will not be allowed to enter the exhibition hall at any time. • All visitors must be suitably attired as this is a professional trade exhibition • The organiser reserves the right to refuse admission to any person or remove any person from the exhibition hall without giving any reason.

Incorporating Spa Asia 2019 · Health Asia 2019 · NaturalAsia 2019

Owned & Produced by: LINES EXHIBITION

Lines Exhibition Pte Ltd
In affiliation with Lines Exposition & Management Services Pte Ltd
• Tel: (65) 6299 8611 • Fax: (65) 6299 8633
• Email: enquiry@lines.com.sg • Website: www.beautyasia.com.sg

Media Partners: • Estetica World • Export Magazine • Kosmetik International • Nailholic • Nation Beauty

fb.com/BeautyAsiaSingapore

THE STRAITS TIMES
MARCH HOLIDAY WRITING WORKSHOPS
English Mastery Workshops

Class 1: Jumpstart Writing For Primary 1
Kindergarten 2 / Primary 1
March 19, 10am to 12.30pm
$149 a student
Cultivate a love of the English Language and for writing. Children will learn basic writing conventions, different ways to start a sentence and how a story develops. Through hands-on activities and story-telling sessions, participants will have a blast as they learn new writing skills.

Workshop topics
- 3 ways to start a sentence
- Sentence writing
- Story-telling
- Event sequencing with story train
- Story booklet writing

Class 2: Creative Writing For PSLE
Primary 5 and 6
March 19, 10am to 1pm or 2 to 5pm
$199 a student
The pen is mightier than the sword. Equip your child with a set of invaluable creative writing skills that can help him craft outstanding stories that shine at the PSLE examination.

Workshop topics
- Show-not-tell
- Using varied sentence structure
- How to build an A* plot
- Crafting a mature conclusion
- In-depth analysis of model paragraphs and compositions

Class 3: O-level Writing Crash Course
Secondary 1 to 4
March 19, 2 to 5pm
$199 a student
Gear up for the O-level examinations. Learn skills and structures that will help you craft good writing for your O-level paper. Popular essay topics will also be covered in this workshop.

Workshop topics
- Overview of essay genres tested in the O-level paper
- Using ST news to craft strong arguments in your essays
- Develop strong thesis statements
- Present effective P-E-E-Ls to convince your reader

Venue: Training Rooms, Level 8, Tower Block, SPH News Centre, 1000 Toa Payoh North

6319-5076
STmasterclass@sph.com.sg
Sign up now at **stskills.sg**

ST news with benefits · STskills

The trainers

Teacher **Brandon** graduated with a first-class honours degree in English Literature from Nanyang Technological University and qualified for the dean's list. A teacher at The Write Corner, he values critical and inventive thinking in both reading and writing.

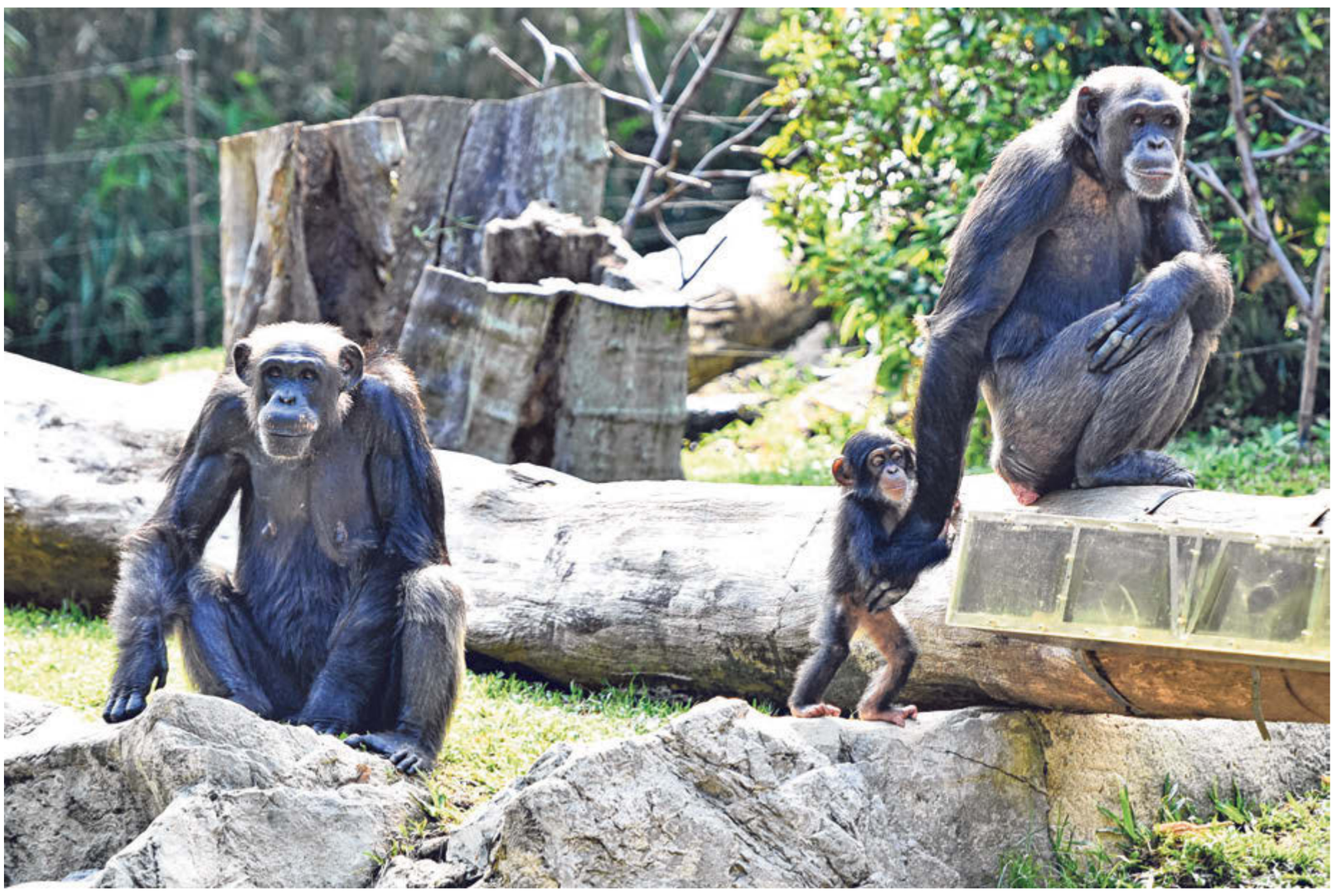
Teacher **Abigail** is an English Language major at the National University of Singapore. She has taught and designed English curriculum in MOE schools and reputable learning centres. She enjoys breaking down challenging literary techniques into digestible writing techniques for students to apply in their compositions.

THE STRAITS TIMES
WE'VE GOT SINGAPORE COVERED
Subscribe now at stsub.sg or call 6388-3838

B

HOME

SARJIT SINGH
BROTHER OF WOMAN WHO DIED TRYING TO CLEAR NAME SAYS LIFE WAS 'HELL' **B4**



Singapore Zoo's chimpanzee baby Nini holding on to Rah, another female chimpanzee. In the enclosure with them is Nini's mother Bianca. The one-year-old is ready to start exploring and playing with other members of the troop, but still spends most of her time clinging on to her mother. ST PHOTO: JOSEPH CHUA

700

Number of animals born at the four parks under Wildlife Reserves Singapore last year.

540

Number of baby animals born at the four parks in 2017.

600

Number of babies born at the parks in 2016.

WILDLIFE BABY BOOM

The four wildlife parks successfully bred over 700 animals representing 131 species last year

Toh Ting Wei

More than 700 animals from across 131 species were born at the four parks under Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS) last year.

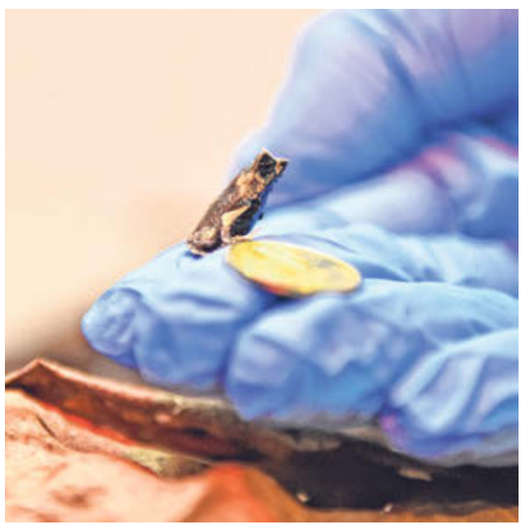
Among the newborns were 35 species listed as threatened under the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.

The standout success is the breeding of the endangered Santa Cruz ground-dove at Jurong Bird Park, with 12 chicks born since late December, WRS said.

Other notable newborns include a chimpanzee, a Celebes crested macaque, a pair of sloth bears and Malayan horned frogs.

Dr Cheng Wen-Haur, WRS' deputy chief executive officer and chief life sciences officer, said: "Our team of zookeepers and veterinarians have done us proud again with some outstanding achievements in conservation breeding.

"The world-first breeding of a Santa Cruz ground-dove in human care is a significant step in establishing an assurance population of this species away from their natural home." An assurance population refers to a colony of a species bred under human care and ensures that the species does not go completely extinct even if it were to die out in the wild.



A Malayan horned froglet next to a five-cent coin. Five tadpoles successfully reached froglet stage last year and two survived to grow into juveniles. ST PHOTO: JOSEPH CHUA

About 300 of the doves, which are native to the Solomon Islands, are estimated to exist in the wild.

The first chick at the Bird Park hatched on Dec 31. More chicks could be on the way as more eggs are incubated, in what is "a significant win" for the species, WRS said.

Jurong Bird Park also successfully bred three "critically endangered" straw-headed bulbuls last year, after hatching one in 2017. The songbird is threatened by poaching and Singapore is the last stronghold of the species, with a local wild population of over 200.

Meanwhile, Singapore Zoo had a prolific year in breeding amphibians, WRS said. In a first for the zoo, five tadpoles of the Malayan horned frog successfully reached froglet stage – the stage before becoming an adult frog.

Two have survived and grown into juveniles.

It also recorded its first birth of a Celebes crested macaque, Agung, in seven years. The "critically endangered" species is threatened by habitat loss and natives hunting for bush meat.

At the Night Safari, zookeepers successfully brought up a pair of sloth bearcub twins, after hand-raising them in order to maximise their chances of survival.

Born last September to an inexperienced mother, Shreya and Zara needed constant care in their first few weeks. They are now being prepared for their public debut.

At the River Safari, a giant anteater, Leona, was born last year for the first time in four years.

Dr Cheng said the main goal of breeding wildlife at the WRS parks is to achieve sustainable populations of species in human care.

"Depending on the species and circumstances, these animals can be ambassadors for community engagement and education, and they may also serve as assurance colonies to safeguard against their extinction in the wild.

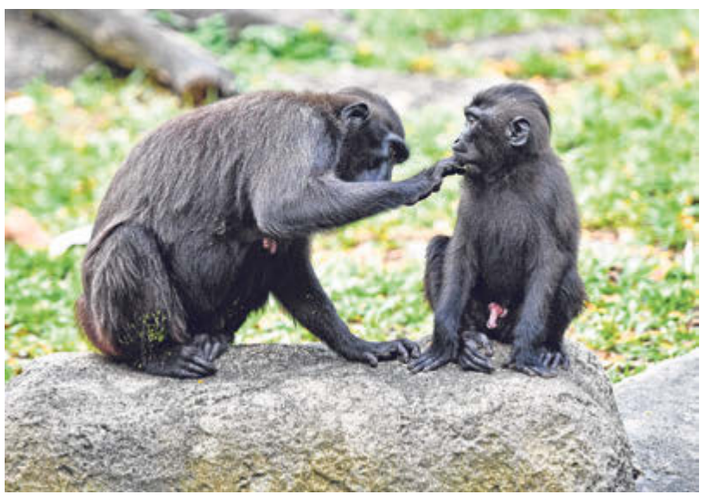
"The ultimate goal would be to return some of these zoo-born progenies to their wild habitats some day, when it is safe to do so," he said.

WRS registered 540 baby animals in 2017 and more than 600 in 2016.

twtoh@sph.com.sg

Sloth bearcub Shreya at the Night Safari. She and her twin sister Zara were hand-raised to maximise their chances for survival. ST PHOTO: JOSEPH CHUA

A world-first breeding of Santa Cruz ground-doves in human care. The first chick was hatched at Jurong Bird Park on Dec 31. PHOTO: WILDLIFE RESERVES SINGAPORE



Agung, a Celebes crested macaque, being groomed by his mother. He is the first such macaque to be born at the zoo in seven years. ST PHOTO: JOSEPH CHUA

Man punched three-year-old daughter, pregnant girlfriend

Shaffiq Alkhatib

In a fit of anger, an odd-job labourer hit his pregnant girlfriend's stomach thrice and punched his three-year-old daughter's face after a dispute with the woman's teenage daughter.

The woman was then six months pregnant with his child.

The 37-year-old man pleaded guilty in court yesterday to two counts of assault and one count each of wrongful confinement and ill-treating a child.

He cannot be named due to a gag order to protect the identities of his victims.

The court heard that the man punched his 32-year-old girlfriend's face on June 12, 2017.

Court documents did not reveal the reasons behind this incident.

The woman's 16-year-old daughter visited her the next day and confronted the man when she saw that her mother was injured.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Chee Ee Ling said the teenager then told her mother to abort the baby as the man was "unable to take care of her" and was "a violent man".

Enraged, he marched up to his pregnant girlfriend and punched her stomach three times.

After that, he scratched the teenager's wrist and pulled her hair.

The girl then asked him if he would like it if someone hit his biological child.

On hearing this, he went up to his daughter, whose mother is his 25-year-old former girlfriend.

He punched the toddler in the face and pulled her hair as she lay in bed, making her cry.

The DPP told District Judge May Mesenas that none of the three victims sought medical treatment after the incident.

Separately, the man had a dispute with his girlfriend at his home on March 12 last year as he suspected her of cheating on him with her former boyfriend.

He told her that he was calling off the relationship, before locking the front gate to stop her from leaving.

He also damaged the woman's mobile phone to prevent her from calling the police.

After that, he used his hands to choke her and said: "If I can't get you, then no one else can."

The man continued attacking her after she managed to free herself.

DPP Chee said he punched her face a few times, pulled her hair and kicked her chest.

She lodged a police report four days later.

A report from the Institute of Mental Health last April revealed that the man had anger management issues and other conditions, including depression with psychosis.

However, the court heard that his major depression had no causal link to his offences.

The man was offered bail of $5,000 and will be sentenced on March 25.

For each count of assault, he can be jailed for up to two years and fined up to $5,000.

For ill-treating the child, he can be jailed for up to four years and fined up to $4,000.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

Study: Chinese S'poreans lack awareness over TCM remedy

Above: A saiga in the Stepnoi Reserve in Russia. Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan signed an agreement in 2006 to work together for the conservation of the critically endangered species of antelope.

Anti-clockwise from left: Saiga horns, more commonly known as ling yang or antelope horns, are used in TCM to treat heatiness and its symptoms like fever. They are sold in several forms, including as a drink and shavings. PHOTOS: ANDREY GILJOV AND KARINA KARENINA, ST READERS

Many who use products made from antelope horn do not know animal is critically endangered

Felicia Choo

One-fifth of Chinese Singaporeans use products derived from a critically endangered species of antelope, but many do not know about its conservation status, based on findings from local research.

The silver lining for the remaining 120,000 or so saigas roaming the steppes of Central Asia is that demand for such products here has stabilised or declined, following trade restrictions, said traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) shops.

Saiga horns, more commonly known as ling yang or antelope horns, are used in TCM to treat heatiness and its symptoms like fever. They are sold in several forms, including as a drink and shavings. The grassland animal used to number in the millions, but poaching and – to a lesser extent – disease outbreaks wiped out much of the population.

Since 1995, the saiga trade has been regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Cites).

In 2006, the authorities in places where the animal remains – Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan – signed an agreement to work together for saiga conservation. Each party then began implementing its own measures, including export trade suspensions and strict internal laws on hunting saiga.

With Singapore being one of the largest markets for saiga products in the world along with China and Hong Kong, researchers from the University of Oxford, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and National University of Singapore found it a good base to study consumption patterns.

Lead researcher Hunter Doughty said: "Saiga consumption is fairly understudied compared to products like rhino horn, yet the TCM market has a major impact on its survival."

The centuries-old remedy is favoured by older people, with two-fifths (40 per cent) of ling yang consumers here aged 35 to 59 years old, the survey found.

It is based on over 2,200 Chinese Singaporeans aged 18 and above and was conducted from June to July in 2017.

Another finding was that more than half of those who used ling yang also bought it for someone else to treat heatiness or fever, and that ling yang users are significantly less likely to use Western products when treating the same ailments.

However, many users did not know the source of ling yang products, how they are obtained, or that the animal is endangered, said Ms Doughty, a doctoral researcher at the University of Oxford.

NTU assistant professor Janice Lee noted: "We want to provide consumers with relevant information so they feel they can make an informed decision when purchasing their health products."

Alternatives to ling yang are plant-based remedies like chrysanthemum tea, barley water or honeysuckle, she added.

Supermarkets like Giant and FairPrice sell saiga products, but the bulk of it is sold at TCM shops, which said trade restrictions have dampened demand for saiga products.

The import and export of saiga products here requires a Singapore Cites permit, under the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore's Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act.

Ms Chan Mei Yi, general manager of Thye Shan Medical Hall, said: "There's definitely been less and less demand for ling yang products because they have become less easily available.

"But it's reasonable because we're talking about protecting an endangered animal."

feliciac@sph.com.sg

Saiga used to number in the millions, but poaching and – to a lesser extent – disease outbreaks wiped out much of the population.

Reformative training for teen who molested underage girl

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A student molested an underage girl on eight separate occasions from 2013 to 2017 and even committed the offences during family gatherings.

The 19-year-old was sentenced yesterday to a year's reformative training after pleading guilty last month to two counts of molestation. He will be sent to a reformative training centre to follow a strict regimen that includes foot drills and counselling.

Six other charges for similar offences were considered during sentencing. He cannot be named to protect the victim's identity. Court documents did not reveal the nature of their relationship.

In March 2015, the girl, then 13, went to his home for a family gathering. He attracted her attention by holding on to her cellphone. He then asked her to follow him into a bedroom and pulled her inside when she refused.

She tried to leave when he asked her to enter a bathroom and deliberately tripped her, causing her to fall. He then sat on top of her to prevent her from escaping and forced her to sexually stimulate him. He also molested her, the court heard.

The girl was at his home again on Oct 8, 2017, to celebrate his sister's birthday.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Muhamad Imaduddien said the victim then discovered that her cellphone had gone missing.

The DPP added: "From similar incidents in the past, she knew that the accused had taken her phone. She went to the master bedroom and stood outside the door. She suspected that the accused was hiding behind the door as she could not see him.

"When the victim asked the accused to return her phone, the accused replied from behind the door that he would return the phone if the victim went into the room to talk to him."

She refused to enter and sought help from his sister. The boy still refused to hand over the device after his sister stepped in, telling her that he wanted to sleep.

The victim later went into the room to check if he was really sleeping so that she could retrieve her cellphone. The boy suddenly appeared from behind the door, pulled her into a toilet and molested her.

The girl finally alerted the police on Oct 11, 2017.

Yesterday, defence lawyer Pang Khin Wee urged District Judge May Mesenas to sentence his client to probation. He also said the boy was a youthful offender who has supportive parents.

The judge, however, said the teenager had committed serious offences and the sentence had to reflect their severity.

The teenager is out on bail of $10,000 and will surrender himself at the State Courts on April 15 to begin serving his sentence.

For each molestation charge, offenders can be jailed for up to 10 years and caned.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

Updated voter rolls open for public inspection until March 11

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent

The voter rolls have been updated and Singaporeans will be able to check their particulars in the registers from today, said the Elections Department in a statement yesterday.

Those who want to check their eligibility to vote can do so online at the Elections Department website. They can also check their particulars in person at community centres and clubs or at the Elections Department office in Bras Basah.

Singaporeans who are overseas can also check the voter rolls at Singapore overseas missions that serve as registration centres. Those inspecting the voter rolls in person must bring along their NRIC or passports with them. The registers of electors will be open for public inspection until March 11.

During the inspection period, Singaporeans can submit a claim to be included in the register if their names have been omitted or to update their particulars. They can also submit an objection to have their names removed from the register. These claims and objections can be submitted either in person or via the Elections Department's website using SingPass.

People who have had their names removed from the registers for failing to vote in a past election can apply to have their names restored, so that they can vote in future elections.

The Elections Department encourages people to make such applications early.

The Parliamentary Elections Act requires the registers to be revised no later than three years after every general election. It also provides for the Prime Minister to call for revisions from time to time.

The last general election took place in September 2015, while the next must be held by April 2021.

The registers of electors were last updated in June 2017, in preparation for the presidential election in September that year.

linettel@sph.com.sg

Four youths slammed for posing on top of war memorial in photo

Adeline Tan

A photo circulating online of people striking poses on a war memorial has drawn flak from netizens.

The photo, which was uploaded on Feb 18, showed four young men striking different poses on top of The Cenotaph, in Esplanade Park.

One of them is believed to have even made a rude gesture.

The Cenotaph was built in 1920 and extended in 1950 to honour soldiers who died in World Wars I and II. It was gazetted a national monument in 2010.

Many netizens said that the young men were being disrespectful, calling what they did immature and in bad taste.

The National Heritage Board (NHB) said members of the public should accord due respect at war memorials, which are spaces for contemplation and reflection.

An NHB spokesman told The New Paper: "We hope that every Singaporean who visits any national monument will be aware of and respect the significance of these historic landmarks. This means responding in an appropriate and sensitive manner.

"We believe most Singaporeans and visitors are aware of the social norms in visiting historic or religious spaces, and we are optimistic that most visitors will be mindful of their behaviour."

When The New Paper visited the Esplanade Park and War Memorial Park, there were no signs telling visitors if climbing on the monuments was allowed.

Mr Simon Loi, 21, an undergraduate from the National University of Singapore, said: "This is just plain insensitive and disrespectful. Even if they claimed that they did not know about the significance of the monument, wouldn't the words 'Our Glorious Dead' send a hint?"

But some felt that the men did not do it out of contempt.

Civil servant Jane Tan, 24, said: "I think they likely did it to have fun and probably saw the monument as just another part of their surroundings, and not really something significant.

"Regardless of their intentions, this incident does reveal that there is a lack of understanding about the role that heritage sites and monuments play in Singapore, and how members of the public should constructively engage with them."

In 2013, a security guard who vandalised The Cenotaph was jailed.

In other parts of the world, tourists have also been banned from sacred and cultural sites after the authorities deemed their acts inappropriate.

tanpya@sph.com.sg

The Cenotaph honours soldiers who died in World Wars I and II. It was gazetted a national monument in 2010. A photograph uploaded online last week showed four young men striking different poses on top of the monument. One of them is believed to have made a rude gesture. ST FILE PHOTO

Ethics class for Islamic teachers to go online

This is to ensure all religious teachers attend mandatory class by next year

Hariz Baharudin

Accredited Islamic religious teachers who have yet to attend a mandatory ethics class can soon do so online. This is part of a new initiative to ensure that all of them fulfil the requirement by 2020 or risk being struck off.

Ustaz Irwan Hadi from the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) revealed this in a recent interview with The Straits Times, following news that an accredited Islamic religious teacher was detained under the Internal Security Act (ISA).

The three-hour class explains the code of ethics all Islamic religious teachers – also known as asatizah – have to adhere to.

The code states, among other things, that a religious teacher must not advocate any idea that is likely to encourage extremism or violence. It also states that they cannot do anything that denigrates any racial or religious group, or that will cause public disorder.

Ustaz Irwan, who is the council's deputy director for religious policy and regulation, said Muis and the Asatizah Recognition Board (ARB), which both look after the Asatizah Recognition Scheme (ARS), have plans to put the class online.

While details have not been finalised, he added that this will also allow for "blended learning", which means having the class conducted in the form of face-to-face teaching as well as through electronic media.

He said: "We are now planning to have an online code of ethics class, to bring it online, to have blended learning. We are exploring that."

The Straits Times understands that more details will be available in the second quarter of this year.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said in January that Murad Mohd Said, 46, was issued a Restriction Order under the ISA for his beliefs in promoting violence and views harmful to Singapore's harmony.

Murad, who was struck off the ARS last May for his segregationist ideologies that contravened its code of ethics, is the first accredited religious teacher to be dealt with under the ISA.

His student, 56-year-old technician Razali Abas, became convinced that it was legitimate to kill those who he felt were oppressors of Islam, including non-Muslims. He was issued with a Restriction Order "to prevent him from continuing his downward spiral into extremism", said MHA.

In the interview, Ustaz Irwan said Murad was among one-third of the 4,425 religious teachers on the ARS who had yet to attend the mandatory class on ethics.

For asatizah who have attended the ethics class, their ARS accreditation could be revoked if they are deemed to have flouted the ethics code, said Ustaz Irwan, shedding light on a little-known monitoring unit under the ARB that keeps tabs on the activities of teachers.

He said the unit will also flag teachers who show repeated signs of problematic behaviour, like posting content online that would be detrimental to Singapore's racial and religious harmony.

It was partly thanks to this monitoring unit, as well as feedback from the public, that Murad was discovered and struck off the scheme, said Ustaz Irwan.

Ustaz Irwan Hadi from the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore said asatizah who have attended the ethics class could have their ARS accreditation revoked if they are deemed to have flouted the ethics code. PHOTO: BERITA HARIAN

The ARS began as a voluntary scheme in 2005 but became mandatory from 2017, in a move to ensure that members of the Muslim community knew who to turn to for credible religious advice.

The number of accredited teachers under the ARS, which has increased by nearly 30 per cent since 2017, include Quranic teachers, teachers who teach religious classes on the weekends and those in full-time madrasahs.

When asked about the proportion of teachers who have been struck off the ARS or have had their applications rejected, a Muis spokesman said it was unable to share such figures as "some of these cases are still pending".

Some have questioned how the ARS monitors its teachers, given how it allowed Murad to teach. But Ustaz Irwan said the fact that Murad was weeded out is testament to how well the ARS works.

This echoes what Minister-in-Charge of Muslim Affairs Masagos Zulkifli had stressed in Parliament earlier this month.

Mr Masagos said the revocation of Murad's accreditation reflected how the ARS should work.

He added: "It monitors and takes action to bar those whose views are inimical to social cohesion from preaching."

Said Ustaz Irwan: "We don't want somebody who is not fit and proper, with ideological or doctrinal issues, to be out there teaching. That was why Murad's accreditation was cancelled."

harizbah@sph.com.sg

Guiding Teacher
Venerable Chi Boon
Ven. Chi Boon is the abbot of Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Meditation Centre (KYCL). He became Ji Do Poep Sa (JDPS) – a guiding teacher, after he was given 'inka' on 8 November 1998 by Zen Master Seung Sahn.

92nd ZEN MEDITATION COURSE
Starting Date: 9 March 2019 (Sat)
Total 6 Lessons (Every Saturday)
Venue: Kwan Yin Chan Lin Zen Meditation Centre | 7pm - 9.30pm
Course Fee: S$60
Online Registration: **https://bit.ly/2CUjaSE**

7-DAY ZEN RETREAT @ DESARU
18 - 24 April 2019 (Thu - Wed)
Desaru Zen Meditation Centre
Fee: $180
Online Registration:
http://bit.ly/2E6sJhZ
Registration Deadline:
1 April 2019 (Thursday)

Regular Activities
Meditation Group Practice
Tue, Thu | 7.30pm-9.30pm
Sat | 7.00pm-9.30pm
Sun | 1.30pm-4.00pm

WEEKEND ZEN MEDITATION AND FASTING RETREAT
16 - 17 March 2019 (Sat & Sun)
S$60
Online registeration:https://bit.ly/2RQjWEp

KWAN YIN CHAN LIN ZEN MEDITATION CENTRE
21 Lorong 25 Geylang S(388299) | www.kyclzen.org
kyclzen@singnet.com.sg | (T) 6392 0265 | (F) 6392 4256

An ntuc Initiative

A Smarter Way to Procure Cleaning Services

PROGRESSIVE WAGE MODEL FOR THE CLEANING SECTOR

The Progressive Wage Model (PWM) for the cleaning industry was revised in December 2016 to maintain its relevance to the cleaning sector. Under the PWM, outsourced cleaners would have a clear wage and career progression pathway in line with their skills, job responsibilities and productivity.

A mandatory PWM Bonus will take effect from January 2020 and is payable to Singapore Citizens and Permanent Resident outsourced cleaners who have worked for the same cleaning business for at least 12 months. The total PWM Bonus quantum in a given year must be no less than two weeks of the cleaner's basic monthly wage.

Office & Commercial Sites
E.g. Clinics, Condominiums, Educational Institutions, Hospitals, Shopping Malls

From 1 July 2019, the basic wage levels will increase:

	Current	1 July 2019	1 July 2020
Supervisor	$1,720	$1,800	$1,854
Multi-skilled Cleaners cum Machine Operator	$1,520	$1,600	$1,648
Healthcare Cleaners / Outdoor Cleaners	$1,320	$1,400	$1,442
General / Indoor Cleaners	$1,120	$1,200	$1,236

All wage points refer to basic starting salary.

F&B Establishments
E.g. Coffee Shops, Food Courts, Hawker Centres

From 1 July 2019, the basic wage levels will increase:

	Current	1 July 2019	1 July 2020
Supervisor	$1,720	$1,800	$1,854
Multi-skilled Cleaners cum Machine Operator	$1,520	$1,600	$1,648
Dishwasher / Refuse Collector	$1,320	$1,400	$1,442
Table-top Cleaners	$1,220	$1,300	$1,339
General Cleaners	$1,120	$1,200	$1,236

All wage points refer to basic starting salary.

Conservancy
E.g. Public Cleansing, Town Councils

From 1 July 2019, the basic wage levels will increase:

	Current	1 July 2019	1 July 2020
Truck Drivers (Class 4/5)	$1,820	$1,900	$1,957
Supervisor / Mechanical Drivers	$1,720	$1,800	$1,854
Multi-skilled Cleaners cum Machine Operator / Refuse Collector	$1,520	$1,600	$1,648
General Cleaners	$1,320	$1,400	$1,442

All wage points refer to basic starting salary.

Technology + Manpower = *Better* Cleaning Outcomes + *Better* Value

SERVICE BUYERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ADOPT THE FOLLOWING PRACTICES:

- Specify service outcomes and performance standards instead of headcount in tender specifications
- Allow longer lead time for service providers to submit proposals that incorporate technology solutions
- Provide longer contract durations to lower amortised cost of technology solutions
- Adopt Price-Quality Method where quality attributes have heavier weightage over price

For NEA's Guide on Specifications for Outcome-Based Cleaning Contract
Scan or visit www.nea.gov.sg

READY-TO-GO TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED SOLUTIONS

- Mechanized / Autonomous Cleaning Technologies (e.g. Autonomous scrubber)
- Smart Toilet System track user feedback, odour level, consumables replenishment needs with data collection and reporting functions
- Workforce Management track and schedule workforce for deployment at multiple sites

For IMDA's Guide to Digital Solutions for the Environmental Services industry
Scan or visit
www.imda.gov.sg/environmental-services-idp

Addendum Report of the TCC (15 November 2018)
Scan or visit:
www.ntuc.org.sg/tripartiteguidelines

KEEN TO FIND OUT MORE? CONTACT US TODAY!

NTUC U Care Centre
1800 255 2828 (Mon-Fri: 9am-6pm)
ucarecentre@ntuc.org.sg
www.ntuc.org.sg/ucarecentre
www.facebook.com/ucarecentre

u care centre

What's Good
LOOKING AT THE UPSIDE

Share the upside of life in ST's Facebook group str.sg/whatsgood

Read positive stories at our microsite str.sg/stwhatsgood

Mr Sarjit Singh, brother of Ms Satwant Kaur, recalled how a month after having to deal with the death of his sister, the family went through further anguish when her former employer sued his late sister's estate for $1.63 million. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

For 6 years, life was hell: Dead woman's brother

Relief for family of woman sued for $1.6m after court dismisses suit

K. C. Vijayan
Senior Law Correspondent

Despite being cancer-stricken, a woman facing cheating charges amounting to some $1.6 million wanted to have a trial to clear her name rather than accept a discharge not amounting to an acquittal.

But four months after she was issued the discharge not amounting to an acquittal, Ms Satwant Kaur, 49, died.

Her death in May 2016, however, brought even greater anguish to her family a month later when her former employer slapped a civil suit on her estate to recover the money.

Recalling their six-year ordeal from the time she was investigated in 2012, her brother Sarjit Singh, 55, said: "There are two places in life you do not want to go to – courts and hospitals. And our family went through both at the same time."

But last month, the family shed tears of relief when the High Court threw out the lawsuit by Red Star Marine Consultants, finding it could not stand as its managing director Dhanvinder Singh "was not a truthful witness on the main issue".

Mr Sarjit, who spoke to The Straits Times in the wake of the High Court judgment, said his late sister was charged in 2014 in the criminal case and late that year, was diagnosed with cancer of the uterus.

"She had to undergo major surgery in hospital and for some six months, our worry and energy shifted to her health and recovery."

After investigations started in 2012, she was required to go every month to a police station to renew her police bail. Her younger sister Manjit, 48, a real estate agent, would accompany her to the station.

During the police probe, Ms Satwant had admitted she received various sums from Red Star with Mr Dhanvinder's consent, but claimed among other things, that whenever he needed money, he would ask her to withdraw it from her personal account for his own use.

Representations made by her lawyer R. S. Bajwa relating to the evidence in the case led to the prosecution successfully applying to the courts to issue a discharge not amounting to an acquittal in January 2016.

Said Mr Sarjit, a safety consultant, "My sister was not happy. She wanted a trial to prove her innocence but we persuaded her to accept it because of her grave illness."

Ms Satwant Kaur was diagnosed with cancer in 2014 and died in 2016. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SARJIT SINGH

By then, the cancer had spread to her spine and following a further operation, she survived for only a month, he added. "The stress had made it worse but she kept it to herself, telling us, 'I'm not worried so why are you worried.'

"Although she was in great discomfort and could not sit up after the operation, she would always reassure us that everything was all right. But how much worry there was in her we did not know.

"On the night of 7 May 2016, I told her, 'I will get justice for you.' At 2.18am the next day, as we all stood around her, she held up her hands to us and placing her palms together as in prayer, she passed on."

Her funeral was held the following day, which was also the birthday of Ms Manjit.

As Mr Sarjit's family mourned Ms Satwant's death, Red Star sued his late sister's estate for $1.63 million as well as Ms Manjit, claiming the latter had used money from her late sister to buy two properties.

"That was most distressing. My sister Satwant had a lot of the information but she was not around to defend herself," Mr Sarjit said.

Worse was the distress of his 76-year-old mother, Madam Amarjit Kaur, who would become "highly emotional" every time her late daughter's name was mentioned.

She had lived with Ms Satwant for more than 20 years in their Rowell Road flat and insisted on continuing to live in the flat alone rather than move into Mr Sarjit's home in Woodlands.

"For more than six years, life had been hell. I just don't have the words to describe our pain and our sorrow," Mr Sarjit said.

But on Jan 31, when he heard Red Star's civil suit was dismissed, he and his sister sobbed uncontrollably outside the Supreme Court building.

"I felt the heavy burden drain away," he said. "It's not about winning or losing, it's about the truth prevailing.

"The lesson I learnt from all this is that family is most important. We stayed united, supported each other and found strength in each other," said the father of two grown-up children.

The family hosted a thanksgiving ceremony at the Silat Road Sikh Temple earlier this month, attended by relatives and friends.

vijayan@sph.com.sg

High bar for when claims can be struck out: Judge

The High Court has sent one of its clearest signals yet that applications to strike out claims need to overcome a high hurdle to succeed.

Justice Choo Han Teck, in dismissing such an application, said no claim should be struck out without a trial "as long as there are issues of fact and law that need to be proven".

"The principle here is simple – if Newcastle United can beat Manchester City in the English Premier League, anything can happen," he added in judgment grounds last week. Newcastle upset reigning champions Manchester City 2-1 in a match last month.

The judgment is unusual in that while the threshold for striking out is high, this is the first time it has been put in the way it was – that "anything can happen" at trial and, therefore, the claim is not to be struck out.

Justice Choo made the point in the case in which Hong Kong-based Qroi company, which provides technical services to mobile operators in the region, sued managing partner Ian Pascoe and Grant Thornton Advisory Services for alleged non-payment for services delivered.

The claim against Mr Pascoe was based on breach of warranty of authority, and Qroi alleged that Mr Pascoe was acting for a Grant Thornton entity in Thailand when he inked the agreement.

Subsequently, when Qroi demanded payment from Grant Thornton Thailand, Mr Pascoe demurred, saying he was acting for Grant Thornton Advisory Services, which is the second defendant and is the proper party to the agreement and not Grant Thornton Thailand.

Mr Pascoe applied last November to strike out the suit but Assistant Registrar Norine Tan rejected it.

Mr Pascoe appealed to the High Court, where his lawyer Jordan Tan argued that Qroi's claim showed no reasonable cause of action or was frivolous and vexatious. Qroi's lawyer Kenneth Lim countered that the plaintiff's claim presented the necessary elements for an action for breach of warranty.

Mr Tan cited many cases to show the law supported his case, but the judge pointed out that "the issues in those cases were determined only after trial".

Justice Choo said: "In any event, even if the law is presently on his side so far as the proper parties' issue is concerned, the plaintiff is entitled to challenge that law or the application of it.

"So long as the court may still disagree with current judicial thinking, the plaintiff is entitled to have his action proceeded."

Striking out should be allowed only in a "plain and obvious case or if it was clearly unsustainable", he said, noting that Mr Pascoe was relying on the fact that he was acting as agent for the second defendant which Qroi challenged.

"This is a serious and reasonable challenge that ought to be fully ventilated in the open trial," said Justice Choo. "In my view, the plaintiff's claim here is a reasonable one, and if proved, it should be granted the relief it seeks. That is what the trial is for."

K. C. Vijayan

HAVING ONE'S DAY IN COURT

So long as the court may still disagree with current judicial thinking, the plaintiff is entitled to have his action proceeded.

JUSTICE CHOO HAN TECK

Two tobacco retailers lose licences for selling to underage customers

Ng Huiwen

Two tobacco retailers in Woodlands and Toa Payoh had their licences revoked for selling cigarettes to underage customers, the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) said yesterday.

This means that they will no longer be able to sell tobacco products, the HSA said in a statement.

Retail outlet Fair Inn Food Place, a repeat offender, was found selling cigarettes to an underage person for the second time. Its licence was revoked on Nov 2 last year. The outlet at 806 Woodlands Street 81 first had its licence suspended for six months in January 2016.

The second retailer, Excellence Supermarket at 131 Lorong 1 Toa Payoh, had its licence revoked on Dec 19 last year for selling cigarettes to an underage person in school uniform.

The HSA also suspended the retail licences of four outlets after the operators were caught selling to underage customers. It was their first such offence. They are China Minimart at 417 Yishun Avenue 1; Leeds Mart at 509 Serangoon North Avenue 4; Shell Select at 3535 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6; and Good Price Centre at 21 Hougang Street 51.

With the suspension, these outlets will not be able to sell tobacco products for six months.

In the statement, the HSA said it would not hesitate to take action against errant retailers.

Tobacco retail licensees were also reminded to educate their employees on the law on the sale of tobacco products. Sellers should verify the age of those who wish to buy tobacco products by calculating it from the date of birth, said HSA.

The minimum legal age to use, possess or buy tobacco products was raised to 19 years with effect from Jan 1. It will be raised to 20 years from next year and 21 years from 2021.

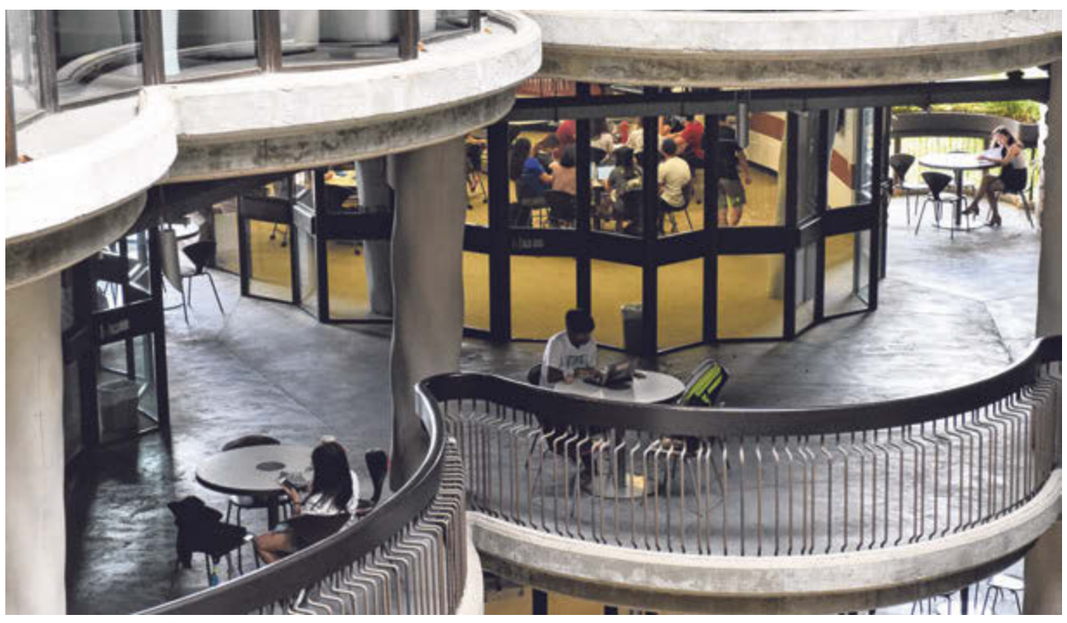
Anyone caught selling tobacco products to those below the minimum legal age may face a fine of up to $5,000 for the first offence and up to $10,000 for the second or subsequent offence.

In addition, their tobacco retail licences will be suspended for six months for the first offence and revoked for the second offence.

Outlets found selling tobacco products to underage people in school uniform or those below 12 years of age will have their licence revoked even for the first offence.

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg

SMU, NTU offer more options, places for computer studies



NTU has allocated 675 places for its 10 computing-related undergraduate programmes this academic year, up from 450 in 2015. It will also offer two new double majors, including mathematical and computer sciences. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

SMU offering 2 new courses; NTU to take in more students for 10 computing programmes

Jolene Ang

More undergraduates will be able to take up computing-related programmes at Singapore Management University (SMU) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) from August this year, when the new academic year begins.

SMU has announced it will be offering two new computing-related degree programmes: computer science, and computing and law.

Students who choose to take up a bachelor's degree in computer science will learn technical skills to build computing products.

Those reading computing and law will be trained in both areas.

SMU said they will be "equipped with skill sets in IT and business innovation, operating IT and business innovations within a legal framework and employing IT in legal practice".

NTU has also allocated 675 places for its 10 computing-related undergraduate programmes this academic year, which include data analytics and cyber security.

This is up from 450 in 2015, which was "the year NTU's intake for these programmes started increasing steadily", said the university.

NTU will also be offering two new double majors – mathematical and computer sciences, and biomedical sciences and bio-business. Both are four-year programmes.

Professor Ling San, NTU provost and vice-president (academic), said: "As a leading global university, we strive to always stay ahead of the curve, seize opportunities in emerging areas, and forecast future industry demand.

"We can then design new programme offerings and plan our intake numbers accordingly in anticipation of this demand."

Students who take up the double major programme in mathematical and computer sciences – offered jointly by the School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences and the School of Computer Science and Engineering – can specialise in at least one of four areas.

They are: theoretical computer science, cryptography and cyber security, data science, and financial modelling.

Those in the biomedical sciences and bio-business programme – run by the School of Biological Sciences, Nanyang Business School and the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) – will learn about biomedical sciences and biotechnology, and also business and manufacturing operations management and industry-related regulatory matters.

Students enrolled in this new programme will spend a semester at CBS to cover the bio-business component.

jolenezl@sph.com.sg

Teen who cheated 16 men in sex scam given probation

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A polytechnic student managed to dupe 16 men out of a total of $3,200 by posing as prostitutes on the Internet.

Lee Chao Hunt created online personas with the names "Jess" and "Alicia", offering sex for $200 a time. But once the men transferred the money to his bank account, they found the women never showed up.

The 19-year-old was sentenced to 18 months' probation yesterday.

As part of his sentence, he must perform 180 hours of community service and has to remain indoors from 10pm to 6am every day.

His mother and sister were also bonded for $5,000 to ensure his good behaviour.

Lee pleaded guilty last month to five cheating charges involving five victims, who had transferred more than $1,000 in all.

The remaining 12 charges linked to 11 other men and an additional $2,200 were considered during sentencing. One man was cheated twice.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Michelle Tay said that in 2016, Lee created an account on online classified advertisement network Locanto to meet "potential romantic interests".

While browsing the website, he came across a warning about scams involving netizens who pretended to offer sexual services and sell pornographic videos.

He then planned a similar ruse and created two other Locanto accounts from December that year, which he used to pose as female sex workers.

Lee created advertisements and offered sexual services in exchange for cash. After receiving the money from his victims, Lee ignored their messages.

DPP Tay told District Judge May Mesenas: "In some instances, the accused would send the victims the fake pornographic videos and pass them off as being videos of the fictitious Jess or Alicia.

"However, the accused never delivered on the sexual services he promised to all the victims."

Court documents did not state how his offences came to light but his bank account was frozen by Dec 1, 2017, when the police conducted their investigation.

Lee later admitted that he had spent his ill-gotten gains on items such as cigarettes and clothes.

He made full restitution to all 16 victims on Nov 14 last year.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

ENHANCE YOUR INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS!
ACC | Institute Of Human Services
LEARN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY AT ACC
SKILLS FUTURE ELIGIBLE
Find out more about our Specialist Diploma courses in relationship and marital counselling, children and youth counselling and more.
Free Preview Talk: 4 Mar (Mon, 3pm) | 19 Mar (Tue, 7pm)
Call 6339 5411 or visit www.acc.edu.sg to register now!
Located at Orchard, 51 Cuppage Road #03-03 (Behind The Centrepoint)
CPE Registration No: 201002023N (29 June 15 – 28 June 19)

TAFEP
Tripartite Alliance for Fair & Progressive Employment Practices
"Staggered Time has enabled us to better manage our busy academic schedules, and still have quality time with our children."
Zachery Rajendran
Senior Lecturer and father of a newborn and a child aged 3 yrs old
Republic Polytechnic
Faith Ng
Lecturer and mother of 3 children aged 2 to 7 yrs old
Republic Polytechnic
+ DEDICATED TEACHING PROFESSIONALS
WITH FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS
As Singapore continues to groom the next generation of skilled professionals, the demand for teaching professionals in Institutes of Higher Learning is on the rise.
By implementing Work-Life Strategy, companies can enhance talent attraction and retention. Republic Polytechnic (RP) has put in place Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) such as Staggered Time, which has helped retain employees successfully, as evidenced by the year-on-year drop in attrition rate since 2012*. Their increased ability to attract dedicated teaching professionals also leads to a more enriching learning experience for RP students. With the adoption of FWAs, employees feel more valued and they are able to fulfil their professional and personal responsibilities across various life stages.
Learn more about Work-Life Strategy and its business benefits at worklifeworks.sg.
*Source: Republic Polytechnic's Office of Human Resources

#readwithST

connecting across generations

Broaden your child's horizons, unlock all Premium articles and stay updated on current affairs.

THE STRAITS TIMES

Join the #readwithST movement and stand to win attractive prizes every week!

share	tag	win
Share an ST article you have read with your child on your Facebook or Instagram.	Post a nugget of wisdom that your child learnt, tag @The Straits Times, and include the hashtag #readwithST.	The ST team will review and select the 3 best entries to win Wild Wild Wet tickets this week! *Winners are chosen weekly by The Straits Times team.

Learn more at **stsub.sg/readwithst**

Subscribe to The Straits Times and top up from as low as **$9.90 a month*** to receive a Samsung tablet.

*Terms and conditions apply

Subscribe at **stsub.sg/tablet** or call **6388 3838**.

Mum jailed for not reporting boyfriend's sexual abuse of child

She let them bathe together even after daughter told her of ordeal

Shaffiq Alkhatib

As a mother, she was supposed to protect her young daughter from sexual predators. However, the cook turned a blind eye to her live-in boyfriend's sexual abuse of the child, which included rape.

Even though the girl told her mother that the man had done "sexual things" to her, the woman did not stop him from showering with the girl on multiple occasions.

The former taxi driver – who was married at the time – sexually abused the child from 2010 to 2016 and his offences came to light only when the girl told his wife about her ordeal.

The mother, a 40-year-old divorcee, was sentenced to the maximum six months' jail yesterday for intentionally failing to alert the police despite having reason to believe that an offence had been committed. She cannot be named due to a gag order to protect her daughter's identity.

The 47-year-old man was sentenced in February last year to 34 years' jail with the maximum 24 strokes of the cane, after pleading guilty to four counts of rape.

He was referred to as "A" in the court documents.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Chee Ee Ling said that the cook entered into an "illicit" relationship with the married man in 2006.

He started molesting the girl when she was placed in his care during the 2010 school holidays. She was only about eight years old at the time.

The girl later told her mother about the acts but the man denied committing the offences when the woman confronted him.

DPP Chee said: "Eventually, the victim stopped telling the accused of these sexual assaults, when she realised that it did nothing to stop A and only created a hostile atmosphere – where the accused would confront A, who would deny and they would both quarrel... The victim, resigned to her fate, simply allowed A to molest her."

In 2014, the girl and her mother moved into the man's Clementi flat.

DPP Chee told District Judge May Mesenas: "Slowly, A grew more brazen and even asked the victim, then 11 years old, to accompany him in the shower for sexual intercourse during the daytime in the accused's presence. This was bizarre, especially since A did not shower with his own biological son who was two years younger than the victim."

The man's wife filed for a divorce in 2016 and moved out of the flat with the son.

The man then moved into his girlfriend's flat, where he continued to sexually abuse the girl.

In June that year, he continued to shower with the girl, then 13 years old, and had sexual intercourse with her in the bathroom while the mother was in the flat.

Unable to endure any more abuse, the girl finally told the man's wife about her ordeal and she referred the teenager to a social worker. The police were notified on June 29 that year.

The mother, who was unrepresented, pleaded for a light sentence yesterday. The girl now lives with her maternal grandparents.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

New CEO to helm exams board from April

Mr Yue Lip Sin is now SEAB's deputy chief executive, and will take over as CEO from April 1.

SEAB chief executive Tan Lay Choo is retiring after 37 years in the education service.

The Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (SEAB) will be headed by a new chief executive from April 1.

Mr Yue Lip Sin, 53, who is currently deputy chief executive of SEAB, will be taking over from Miss Tan Lay Choo, 61, who will be retiring on March 31, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and SEAB announced in a statement yesterday.

Miss Tan's retirement was announced last December. She joined the education service in 1981, and has held several key positions in MOE in her 37 years of service.

She has taught in several schools, including Raffles Institution and Bukit Panjang Government High School, where she served as its principal.

She was appointed chief executive of SEAB on April 1, 2008.

She was conferred the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 2003 for her contributions to the education service.

Her successor, Mr Yue, has held various key positions in MOE, having served as the ministry's director of mother tongue languages and principal of Chung Cheng High School.

He joined SEAB in December 2011 as the director of assessment and research, and was appointed director of assessment planning and development in April 2014.

MOE and SEAB said in the joint statement: "With 29 years of experience in the education service, Mr Yue will continue to ensure that SEAB builds on its capabilities in the development and conduct of the national examinations system."

Choo Yun Ting

President Halimah Yacob speaking to participants of the forum theatre performance at the Singapore Association for Mental Health's Creative SAY centre in Woodlands yesterday. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

President urges youth not to fear talking about mental health

Jev Akshay Jeevan

Once a week, Jaymie Wong, 17, volunteers at a centre in Woodlands where she helps run drama activities for fellow youth.

Yesterday, the first-year applied drama and psychology student from Singapore Polytechnic was joined by two of her course mates for a special forum theatre performance at the Singapore Association for Mental Health's Creative SAY centre.

In the audience was President Halimah Yacob, who visited the preventive and wellness centre in Woodlands to show support and to raise awareness of mental health, which is a focus of this year's President's Challenge – an annual community outreach and fund-raising campaign.

The centre, whose initials stand for sports, arts and youth, offers sports, outdoor and art activities to help spark conversations, promote mental well-being and prevent the onset of mental health issues among young people.

Its programmes, which are open to all youth between the ages of 12 and 35, include art workshops, dance classes, floorball, badminton and sailing.

Yesterday's performance drew attention to the plight of those suffering from mental health issues and placed emphasis on ways to show support and help them.

Jaymie said forum theatre, where spectators are allowed to interact with performers and change the course of the play, allows for the audience to understand that they can make a difference, instead of being mere bystanders.

"This kind of acting shows the audience all the different perspectives," she added.

Madam Halimah said the issue of mental health has to be tackled through a multi-pronged approach, adding that the community has an important role to play.

"Art therapy, group therapy and sports help in the healing process. We need such programmes to be more accessible and affordable to the youth," she added.

One of the students who regularly attend sessions at the centre is Muhammad Firdaus Rohaizad, 14.

The Secondary 3 student said the programme helps him feel he has a purpose and it is "important to talk more about mental health to create more understanding".

Madam Halimah said "our society is filled with a lot of ignorance about mental health" due to a lack of conversation about the topic.

"Ignorance leads to fear, which develops into a stigma," she added.

She urged the youth present: "Go back to school and do not be afraid to talk about mental health."

jevj@sph.com.sg

MORE ACCESSIBILITY NEEDED

Art therapy, group therapy and sports help in the healing process. We need such programmes to be more accessible and affordable to the youth.

PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB, on how the issue of mental health has to be tackled through a multi-pronged approach.

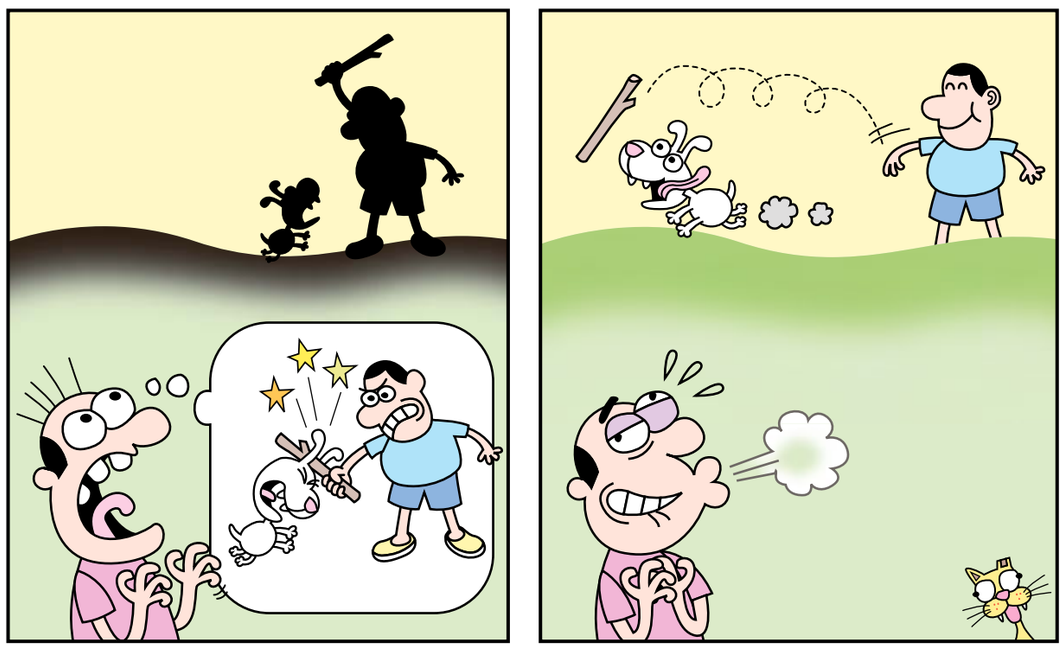
THE STRAITS TIMES
A Singapore Press Holdings publication
News Centre
1000 Toa Payoh North, Singapore
318994

CONTACT US
General line: 6319-6319
Home: 6319-5397
stnewsdesk@sph.com.sg
Business: 6319-5360
stbusiness@sph.com.sg
Life: 6319-5416
stlife@sph.com.sg
Art: 6319-5591
start@sph.com.sg
Newsline: 1800-828-2828
World: 6319-5745
stworld@sph.com.sg
Sport: 6319-5376
stsports@sph.com.sg
Pictures: 6319-5328
stimage@sph.com.sg
ST Digital: 6319-3232
stdigital@sph.com.sg

FORUM

miel's take

More reports of animal cruelty in 2018, but majority turned out to be non-cruelty cases



CPF policies should be simple and logical

I totally agree with Dr Ho Ting Fei's suggestions (Make full CPF payout by age 70, Feb 23).

The Central Provident Fund's (CPF) rules and policies should be simple and logical, instead of being complicated, confusing and potentially contentious.

If savings can be withdrawn from the Ordinary Account at the age of 55, then the same spirit should apply for the Retirement Sum, in that members should be able to withdraw it at the retirement age of 62.

What is the rationale for starting payouts at the ages of 65 to 70, when the minimum retirement age is 62?

And even if we were to accept that payouts must be made monthly even after the age of 70, we cannot assume that everyone will live beyond 90. Those that do are outliers, even with improved medical technology.

Instead, look at the average lifespan, and compute monthly payouts up to that age, with the balance able to be withdrawn at the age of 70.

Those who prefer to keep their savings in their CPF due to the interest rate can do so by opting in.

Ultimately, CPF savings belong to the members, and they should have more say in how they can be used.

Lawrence Loh Kiah Muan

Why use extreme end of bell curve to compute CPF payout?

I was surprised at the low average monthly retirement payout data presented by Manpower Minister Josephine Teo, until a recent correspondence I had with the Central Provident Fund Board.

Although I belong to the cohort whose payout starts at age 63 and lasts for 20 years, I am now "artificially constrained" to receiving a lower monthly payout because changes implemented in 2017 require my payout to stretch to age 93. And all because I was prudent to voluntarily opt for deferring my drawdown.

Interestingly, a study published in the medical journal The Lancet showed the average lifespan in Singapore to be 83.3 years in 2016 (Singapore 3rd in global life expectancy rankings, Oct 18, 2018).

The researchers estimate that this average is expected to move up to 85.4 years by 2040, that is in about 20 years' time.

When did we move from utilising average or median age for such calculations to the extreme right of the bell curve?

Teo Hoon Seng

What determines whether a drug is subsidised?

Mr Tham Zhi Qian's experience of not being told about the Medication Assistance Fund (MAF) available for members of the Pioneer Generation is unfortunately not a one-off case (Public should be aware of available medical subsidies, Feb 20).

The patient service staff at the hospital where my father is currently being treated for cancer did not mention the scheme, even after I asked why there was no subsidy available for the chemotherapy drug Methotrexate used to treat him.

I was told only that a non-standard drug had been dispensed, and that I should ask the relevant authorities why it was not subsidised.

According to the Ministry of Health's website, Methotrexate is actually subsidised as a standard drug in various forms such as tablet and injection, but not in the form of concentrate for solution for infusion which was prescribed by my father's team of doctors.

The basic lexicon on chemotherapy that I have checked in recent weeks all cite Methotrexate, as well as adjunctive drugs such as Rituximab often used in combination with it to mitigate its side effects, as a pretty standard item for treatment.

So why is Methotrexate subsidised only in certain forms, and Rituximab subsidised only in concentrate for infusion form under MAF and subject to means-testing even for Pioneer Generation members like my father?

Surely there should be a focus on inclusion over exclusion when determining drug subsidies, especially for drugs regarded as mainstream for chemotherapy.

I hope the relevant authorities, including the Drug Advisory Committee, can shed some light on this.

Too much focus has been placed on the supply side of rising healthcare costs, and too little on the demand side.

A recalibration is long overdue for the future of sustainable and high-quality healthcare.

Toh Cheng Seong

WRITE IN: Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit the letters. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg.

Botanic Gardens losing what made it special

During Chinese New Year, my family was one of many jostling for space to have a picnic on the lawns surrounding the stage at the Singapore Botanic Gardens.

I realised then that the space had changed, becoming much smaller due to the planting of new shrubs and plants as well as the roping-off of what used to be open sitting areas.

The grand view of the sloping lawn that greeted visitors as they walked towards the Shaw Foundation Symphony Stage is gone, as is the feeling of openness in the middle of a crowded city.

The two lakes – Swan Lake and Eco-Lake – were a refreshing respite to visitors in the middle of land-locked Singapore. Now one of the lakes has all but disappeared, with wetland habitats created around it, and the swans, if they emerge, are usually found walking on the grass.

The Botanic Gardens is now a Unesco World Heritage Site that is adding new features. Along with new zones for children and new walks, there are many practical aspects of the Gardens that are being improved such as parking, and some of the new areas are certainly beautiful.

But parts of the Botanic Gardens were so good to begin with that adding things to them is like adding extra spices to an already well-cooked dish.

There was a natural beauty balanced by the constructed pathways, and I hope the National Parks Board (NParks) will keep that in mind when creating new areas to avoid the feeling of being overly man-made.

NParks could also consider allocating part of its budget to helping Singaporeans who face difficulties visiting the Gardens on their own to enjoy these spaces.

This would include the elderly and the sick, and could comprise outreach programmes .

This, I believe, would be a much better use of resources than continuing to build and potentially ruining what was a perfectly good thing.

Subina Aurora Khaneja (Ms)

OnFacebook

Is competition the best way to motivate children to play sports?

Competitions are not only about winning. Children can learn to be gracious winners and losers.

Training for a competition instils discipline and perseverance. Even if you're not in favour of competitions, don't deprive others of the chance to learn from the experience.
Yu Wah Tang

Start young and let children enjoy the sport they love.
Affan Ruah Mufcs

Children should be awarded not just when they finish in first place, but also when they display their best behaviour in fair play and sportsmanship.
Yap Thian Beng

Do you think it is time to update the Personal Data Protection Act?

Even under current rules, security guards are still collecting NRICs for safekeeping and people are still ignorant enough to oblige, making a mockery of it.
Margaret Chong

The Personal Data Protection Commission should have the power to make telcos ban local phone numbers that are being used for scams.
Jack Lim

Make streaming process at school more fluid

Having received my primary and secondary education in Singapore, and my tertiary education overseas, I must say I did not fully appreciate the benefits of streaming by the former until I embarked on the latter.

At many overseas schools, people of multifarious abilities were put in the same classes, and it was clear the rigour and speed of each class would slow down to accommodate those having difficulties with grasping the concepts.

The obvious downside to this was that those most adept at learning soon became bored and started to look for something else to do, sometimes outside the classroom, and truancy became rampant. Ironically, their grades were dropping due to absences and non-participation.

The less-obvious downside to this was that the schools did not fulfil their responsibility to stretch these otherwise capable students to their full potential and, in a way, let them down in their bid to cater to those less expeditious.

On the other hand, I agree that streaming students has its own drawbacks too (Streaming has both pitfalls and benefits: Ong Ye Kung, Feb 20).

Everyone blossoms at a different age, yet the stigma of being assigned to a lower stream might stay with the person.

Thus, I recommend that Singapore streaming be as fluid as possible, allowing those who have shown readiness to be able to move upstream, with efficient weaning mechanisms in place to better facilitate such moves.

This would, of course, require more resources on the part of the Ministry of Education, but our human capital is an asset class well worth the investment.

Singapore has long been a living proof of fused paragons that work to the envy of others.

For example, our healthcare prototype fuses a mandatory health savings account with a free market system of insurance products, and our low-tax financial blueprint is complemented by the Net Investment Returns Contribution and fiscal prudence.

In the same fashion, I am sure we can construct an effective fused model for our education system.
Lily Ong (Madam)

Review security at educational institutions

The recent fight that broke out at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College West and involved a dangerous weapon (Girl arrested for attacking another girl with dangerous weapon at ITE College West, Feb 22) is the latest in a series of safety lapses at our educational institutions.

It follows the murder of an ITE director at the ITE College Central campus in 2018, the scuffle involving students in a Temasek Polytechnic lecture theatre in 2018, the fight between 20 ITE students near a construction site in 2016, and the slashing attack at ITE College West in 2015.

The Ministry of Education urgently needs to review the safety measures in place to protect lives in our educational institutions.

There has to be a way to keep such incidents from happening year after year. The presence of dangerous weapons in educational institutions must be prevented at all costs.

Fortunately, only two of the four incidents in past years involved weapons. We must not wait till the frequency of the use of weapons goes up.

Screening must be done before anyone enters an educational institution's premises, as is being done in campuses in the United States.

We do not want what happened in China, where attackers wielding knives were able to enter school premises and attack children, to be repeated in Singapore.

News of such incidents can be spread using social media, and there is the risk that people suffering from stress, depression, or who are mentally unsound will try to stage copycat attacks.

Education and counselling are only part of the solution.

It was recently reported that Singapore's overall crime rate has gone up. Measures must be taken to drastically reduce it if we are to maintain Singapore's reputation as a safe haven, and I hope that the authorities will act swiftly.
Gabriel Ong

FORUM ONLINE

SEAH YAM MENG: Regulate vehicle speed at junctions, pedestrian crossings.

MORE LETTERS ON www.straitstimes.com Join readers in sharing heartwarming stories at www.facebook.com/groups/whatsgd/

Preparing for ageing is everyone's responsibility

We thank Mr Wee Sin Chuan for his letter (How much impact has action plan for seniors had?, Feb 18). The Ministry of Health (MOH) agrees that beyond hardware, it is important to empower and motivate seniors to take charge of their own health.

This is why the Action Plan for Successful Ageing includes initiatives to promote health and wellness, as well as learning and volunteerism, to motivate seniors to keep healthy and connected to the community, and delay the onset of frailty.

Mr Wee asked about the effectiveness of the Action Plan. Under the National Seniors' Health Programme, we have reached out to over 550,000 seniors in the community through health talks and exercise programmes.

We have also extended preventive health programmes to workplaces, and reached over 60,000 mature workers in key sectors, ranging from retail to transport.

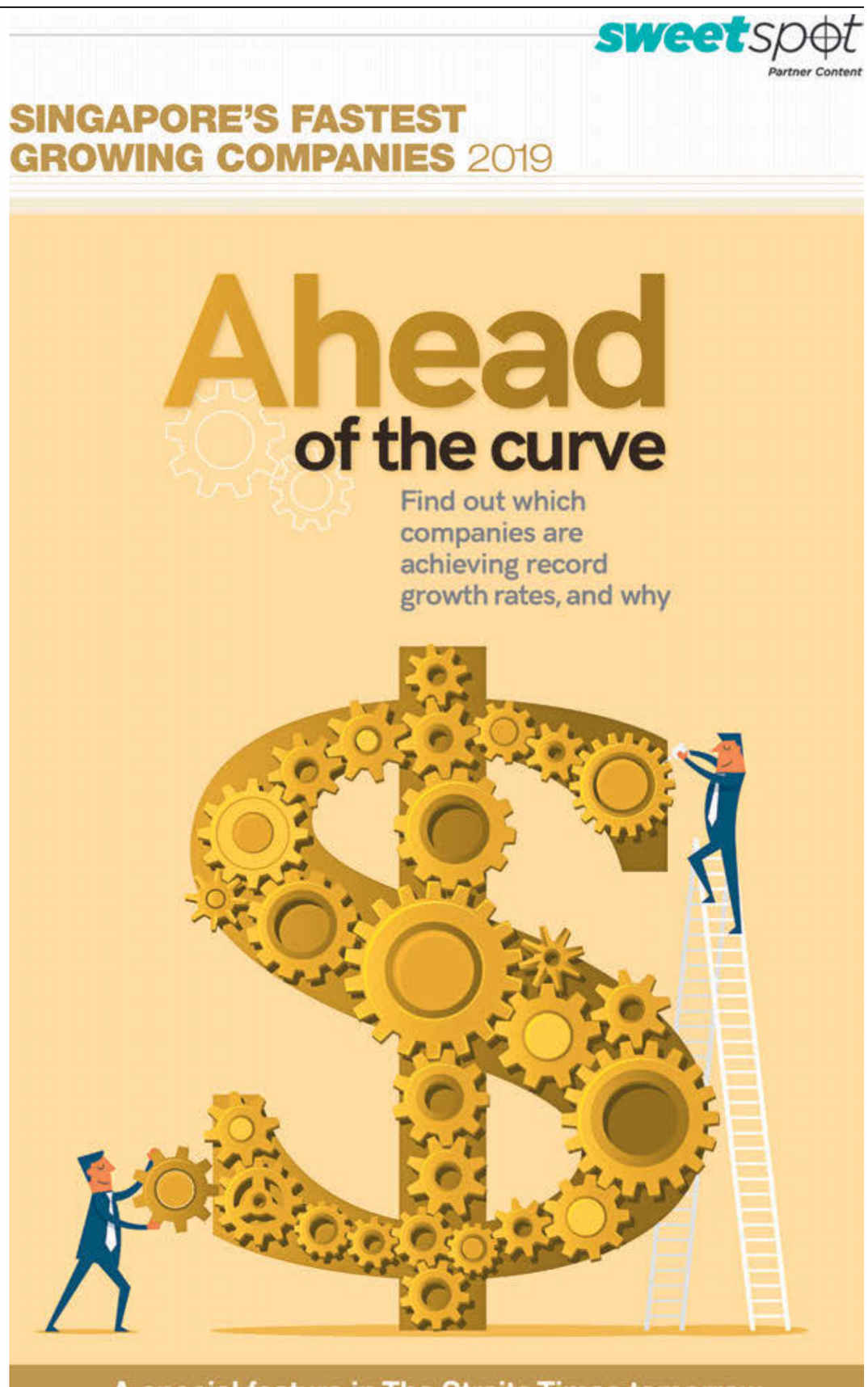
Today, many seniors participate actively in our healthy lifestyle programmes. For instance, around one in five participants in our latest National Steps Challenge season is 60 years old or above.

Seniors also take up a wide range of courses offered by the National Silver Academy, and contribute as volunteers in various areas. About one in four Silver Generation Ambassadors is a senior, and they continue to encourage fellow seniors to adopt healthy lifestyle habits and participate in active ageing programmes as part of their outreach.

Preparing for ageing as a society is the shared responsibility of individuals, families, community and the Government.

MOH will continue to work with partner agencies and the community to enhance our programming for seniors, and encourage more Singaporeans to partner us to make Singapore a Nation for All Ages.

Lim Siok Peng (Ms)
Director, Corporate Communications
Ministry of Health



PICTURE THIS

ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM

Colourful kick-off

The Haiti boys' football team lining up in multicoloured boots to sing their national anthem before their match against Bolivia during the Singapore 2010 Youth Olympics Games. The Bolivians trounced the Haitians 9-0.

Photonico is a website offering high-quality stock photos that celebrate Asian contemporary culture and heritage.

It is a platform that showcases the thousands of editorial and stock photos that our staff and contributing photographers shoot. These photos can be purchased for personal and commercial use at an affordable price.

www.photonico.asia

To contribute photos, get in touch with us at team@photonico.asia

Photonica

SEARCH **BUY** USE

1 **SEARCH** from a vast selection of curated Asian culture and heritage photos.

2 **BUY** photos of old and modern Singapore, travel, nature, food, daily life and more.

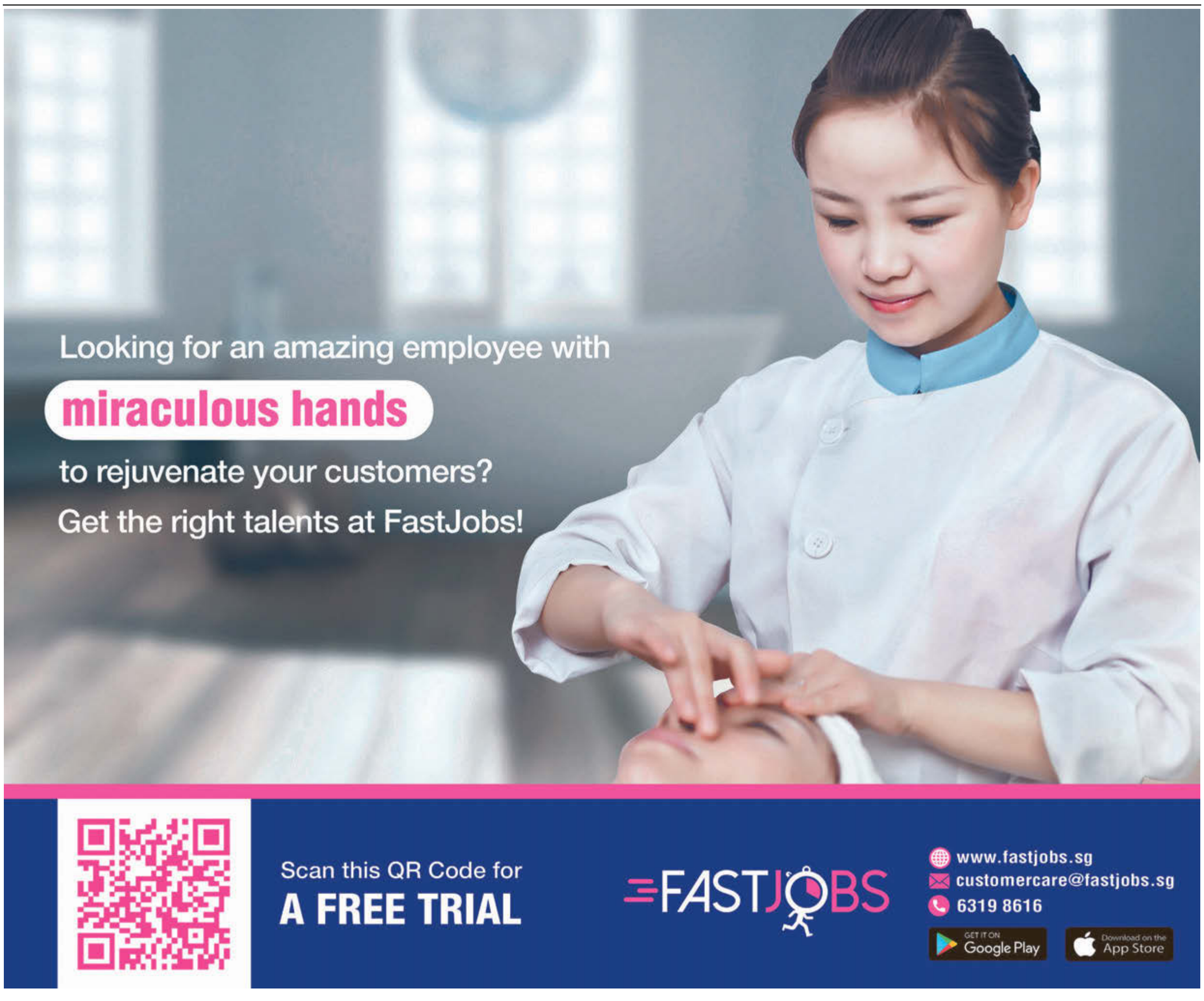
3 **USE** the photos on different platforms with our various licensing options.

SHOOT **SHARE** EARN

1 **SHOOT** your own photos of Singapore and Asian street scenes, nature, daily life and travel.

2 **SHARE** them with us and be part of our community of photographers at Photonico.asia

3 **EARN** when your photos are sold with our 50 per cent revenue share programme.



C | BUSINESS

$175m

CONTRACTS SECURED BY SEMBCORP MARINE TO BUILD LNG BUNKER, MODERNISE CRUISE SHIPS **C5**

Overall inflation forecast cut to 0.5%-1.5% range

New figures prompted by lower oil prices; core inflation forecast unchanged at 1.5%-2.5% range

Seow Bei Yi
Business Correspondent

Lower oil prices have prompted officials to lower their headline – or overall – inflation forecast for the year.

It is now estimated that overall inflation will come in between 0.5 per cent and 1.5 per cent, down from an earlier expectation of 1 per cent to 2 per cent.

The forecast for core inflation – this excludes accommodation and private road transport costs – remains unchanged at between 1.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent.

This reflects the smaller weight of oil-related items in the measure, according to a joint statement from the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) and Ministry of Trade and Industry yesterday.

They added that the extent of overall price increases will be capped by greater market competition in several consumer segments, such as telecommunications, electricity and retail.

The forecasts came as official numbers showed that prices cooled last month.

Overall inflation eased to 0.4 per cent compared with the same month last year, down from 0.5 per cent in December.

This reflected a slower pace of increase in the cost of electricity and gas, which outweighed higher inflation in services.

Likewise, core inflation dipped from 1.9 per cent to 1.7 per cent.

The figures were lower than expected, with a Bloomberg poll of analysts predicting that headline inflation would hit 0.6 per cent with core inflation tipped at 1.8 per cent.

Maybank Kim Eng economist Chua Hak Bin said the drop in core inflation is likely to "provide some breathing space and take the pressure off for MAS in April to tighten monetary policy further".

He said that inflation numbers across the region have been "benign", with slowing growth and cheaper oil reducing price pressures.

"Part of the reason for the collapse in trade and exports is that businesses are in a deep freeze on their investment plans," said Dr Chua, referring to ongoing trade tensions.

"We're all hoping that the US and China will come to some kind of trade deal in the coming weeks, if not months... If there is a deal, I hope some of these companies' business sentiment will reignite, which will lead to some recovery in business investments. Correlated with that is trade."

The cost of electricity and gas rose at a slower pace of 6.5 per cent last month, down from 14.6 per cent in December, due largely to lower oil prices in the preceding months and the effect of the phased nationwide launch of the Open Electricity Market.

Meanwhile, the overall cost of retail items rose by 1.4 per cent year on year, slowing from the 1.7 per cent increase in December.

This stemmed from a steeper decline in the prices of telecommunications equipment, recreation and entertainment goods, as well as a slower pace of increase in the costs of household durables and supplies.

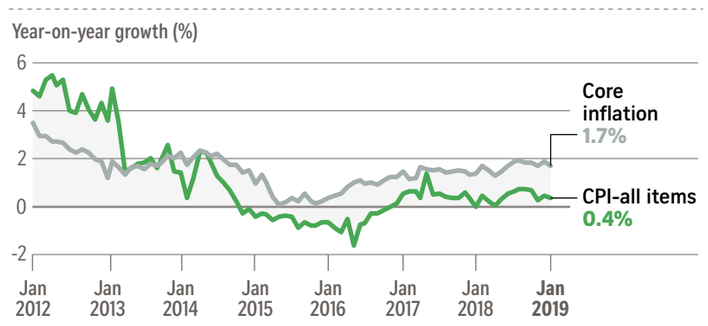
Food inflation came in at 1.4 per cent, unchanged from December, while services inflation picked up from 1.5 per cent to 1.7 per cent. This was mainly due to higher public transport fares that outweighed a smaller rise in holiday expenses.

Private road transport costs dropped 3.4 per cent, against the 3.7 per cent fall in December, as the pace of reduction in car prices eased.

Accommodation expenses fell 1.9 per cent, the same pace of decline in December. This was due to a more gradual fall in residential rents offsetting a smaller rise in the cost of housing maintenance and repairs.

byseow@sph.com.sg

Easing inflation



Source: DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

REIGNITING BUSINESS SENTIMENT

Part of the reason for the collapse in trade and exports is that businesses are in a deep freeze on their investment plans. We're all hoping that the US and China will come to some kind of trade deal in the coming weeks, if not months... If there is a deal, I hope some of these companies' business sentiment will reignite, which will lead to some recovery in business investments. Correlated with that is trade."

MAYBANK KIM ENG ECONOMIST CHUA HAK BIN, noting that the drop in core inflation is likely to "provide some breathing space and take the pressure off for MAS in April to tighten monetary policy further".

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat and ST Engineering Aerospace deputy president Jeffrey Lam (centre) observing a robotic arm at the Airport Road facility yesterday. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Firms should upgrade workforce for future jobs: Heng

Removing the worn coating from the engine fan case of an aircraft used to take around two days when done by hand.

But since last December, a robot has taken over the task at ST Engineering Aerospace – and it can complete the job in about a day.

Such efforts in automation, along with a training council the company set up to equip workers with skills needed for future jobs, make it a good role model for others, said Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat yesterday.

"ST Engineering is among the first few companies in Singapore to set up an in-house training council, to work more closely together with the National Trades Union Congress and to look at the training of their workers," said Mr Heng on the sidelines of a visit to the aerospace facility in Airport Road.

"I hope that many more companies will embark on this... because I think it's important for us to devote time, attention and resources to the upgrading of our workers," he said.

Mr Heng's comments come a week after he delivered the Budget, which included a $4.6 billion investment to boost businesses and support Singaporean workers over the next three years.

Of this amount, $3.6 billion will be used to assist workers during industrial disruptions, while $1 billion will help firms to grow their deep enterprise capabilities.

Mr Heng said he has heard fairly positive comments on the Budget, given that it covers a range of issues from security to economic transformation. But he acknowledged that some sectors will face more stress, in particular those that are more manpower-intensive.

"We will need to continue to work closely together with our trade associations, with our unions, so that we can make this major transition," he said, adding that more time and effort need to be put in.

"As I said in the Budget, if we do not change, then we will be hitting a dead end... It is far better for us to take the slightly more difficult road today, so that we will reach our destination," he said.

Yesterday, Mr Heng flagged the need to focus on solutions and consider positive examples of what companies can do to cope with change, such as in the case of ST Engineering.

Mr Jeffrey Lam, deputy president of ST Engineering Aerospace, said yesterday that the company has put more money into technology to support its workforce.

It has spent up to 20 per cent more on investment in technology and engineering development over the past five years.

This is in part due to customers' rising expectations of higher productivity and better goods, but also because of an ageing workforce. More than half of ST Engineering Aerospace's 9,000 or so employees are aged above 45, said Mr Lam.

"We also have a shortage of labour supply... As a result, we need to invest in technology that will enable us to automate and be more productive," he added.

With the help of new technology, the company has managed to reduce turnaround time for processes by 20 per cent to 50 per cent, he said.

Looking ahead, the company is testing the use of a drone to inspect the exteriors of aircraft, doing away with the need for engineers to climb up and down fixtures.

Mr Lam added: "We will invest in almost all areas to move to (a paperless workflow), to moving our work to mobile devices."

Seow Bei Yi

2 properties launch bids again to sell en bloc

Collective-sale activity is picking up a little, with two properties keen to try their luck, including the long-awaited bid by Pine Grove.

The 660-unit condominium in the Holland Road cluster is being launched today at a reserve price of $1.86 billion.

The price translates to a land rate of $1,307 per square foot per plot ratio (psf ppr), after factoring in differential and lease upgrade premiums, said real estate agency C&H Group yesterday.

Pine Grove had earlier raised its reserve price from $1.72 billion to $1.86 billion in a bid to secure a majority nod from owners.

This is not the first time the estate has tried to sell en bloc.

The 893,219 sq ft, 99-year leasehold site has a gross plot ratio of 2.1.

It can be redeveloped into a residential estate of up to 24 storeys and no more than 2,050 units at an average size of 85 sq m. This cited build-up requires planning approval. The tender closes at 3pm on April 23.

The other sale attempt comes from Peace Centre/Peace Mansion, a prime mixed-development site at 1 Sophia Road with a reserve price of $688 million.

The block sits on a 76,617 sq ft site, with a gross floor area (GFA) of slightly over 600,000 sq ft.

The property has 32 floors, with Peace Centre being a part-seven-, part-10-storey commercial podium block, and Peace Mansion, a 22-storey residential tower with 84 apartments and two penthouses.

The reserve price reflects a land rate of about $1,474 psf ppr, before factoring in bonus balcony plot ratio for the residential component.

This is the owners' fifth attempt at a collective sale.

The site is zoned for commercial use and has a verified gross plot ratio of about 7.89. It could be redeveloped up to a height of 55m above mean sea level, said sole marketing agent JLL.

An outline planning permission has been obtained recently for a developer to redevelop the site up to the existing GFA of about 604,578 sq ft for a mixed commercial and residential project, JLL said.

An application for an in-principle approval for the lease top-up to a fresh 99 years has also been made.

The tender closes at 3pm on April 11.

Shepherds in Oristano, Italy, blocking the roads and emptying milk tanks during a protest against the rising prices of milk two weeks ago. Italy has debt of more than 130 per cent of its gross domestic product, so any rise in interest rates would bring the state budget to breaking point. PHOTO: DPA

Cycle of debt and cheap money traps euro zone

European Central Bank president Mario Draghi has come under criticism for keeping interest rates low. The ECB defends its policy by citing perceived deflationary risks or below-target inflation. PHOTO: REUTERS

ECB shows no sign of ending low interest-rate policy; higher rates put pressure on countries burdened by debt

Markus Ziener
Global Affairs Correspondent
In Berlin

There was hope that more than 10 years after the 2008 financial crisis, capital markets would be on the road back to normal – but those hopes have been dashed in Europe in recent weeks.

The European Central Bank (ECB) is showing no signs of ending its policy of low interest rates.

Officially the main reason to continue the policy is the rather weak economic outlook – the euro zone growth forecast for this year stands at 1.3 per cent, down from more than 2 per cent in previous years.

The Ifo Institute for Economic Research in Munich last week released additional, rather dismal, data.

The sentiment, measured as the so-called Ifo Index, was at a four-year low. One-off factors like diesel curbs or last year's hot summer drying up the Rhine and hampering shipping contributed to the gloom, but the many political unknowns played a major part.

The prospect of a hard Brexit, punitive tariffs implemented by US President Donald Trump against German carmakers and concerns around trade relations between the United States and China are threats to German exports.

Volkswagen chief executive Herbert Diess told The Financial Times that the US tariffs could cost his firm billions of euros in lost revenue.

Ifo economist Klaus Wohlrabe noted: "There was hope that the weak period... in the second half of 2018 was only temporary but it looks like it will continue."

However hazardous those threats, for the ECB they also serve as a welcome justification for not changing course.

A weakening economy makes it easy to argue that low interest rates and cheap money have to be maintained to ease borrowing and support investment.

The real reason, though, may be something else. Some euro zone member states have debt levels way beyond the threshold of 60 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) that was agreed when setting up the single currency.

If interest rates stay at zero or close to zero, these countries can more or less service these loans. Higher interest rates would exert tremendous pressure on individual state budgets and likely limit expenditures in areas like social welfare.

It would be almost impossible in countries where governments have promised an easing of hardships and more state support to sell such belt-tightening to their people.

Italy has debt of more than 130 per cent of GDP, so any rise in interest rates would bring the state budget to breaking point.

Last year, the country's right-wing government fought with the European Union for months to push through an expansion of its budget, thus violating European rules.

Italy's leaders caved in at the eleventh hour and scrapped most of its spending plans; the government at least does not want to see an increase in its debt payments.

ECB president Mario Draghi, an Italian, will certainly not raise interest rates as a last service to his country before leaving the ECB.

The situation does not look much better in nations like Spain, France and Belgium, where state debt ranges between 90 and 100 per cent of GDP. The governments understandably have no interest in changing the policy of cheap money.

Mr Draghi's low-interest legacy has come under heavy fire from Mr Jurgen Stark, a member of the ECB's executive board from 2006 to late 2011 and a vice-president of the German Bundesbank for eight years.

Mr Stark wrote recently in the Swiss Neue Zurcher Zeitung newspaper: "During his presidency, the ECB turned into a mighty, highly politicised and therefore also vulnerable institution."

While he acknowledges the successful rescue of the euro during the Greek crisis and the preserving of price stability within the euro zone, he takes particular issue with the bank's quantitative easing.

This allowed the ECB to buy state bonds of member countries and ended up increasing liquidity in capital markets by €2.6 trillion (S$4 trillion). "With this, the ECB policy has become much more aggressive than in the past," Mr Stark wrote.

The ECB defends its policy by citing perceived deflationary risks or below-target inflation. But the reality looks different. Deflation – a self-reinforcing downward spiral in prices, wages and economic performance – never existed in the euro zone in general. Falling inflation had far more to do with the decline of energy and raw material prices.

The ECB, however, had no inclination to change course. Political pressure and probably also an addiction to cheap money ensured that Mr Draghi stayed on the beaten track.

Given the debate on the other side of the pond, the ECB president at least is in good company. Former Obama-presidency officials Jason Furman and Lawrence Summers are making somewhat light of running up debts.

It is more important to build infrastructure, provide access to healthcare or to properly fund preschools, the left-leaning economists noted, concluding: "It's time for Washington to put away its debt obsession and focus on bigger things".

For Mr Stark, however, the ECB has become "a prisoner of its own policy", warning that cheap money available on distorted markets is making risk-taking easy and leads to wrong decisions.

"Once the next crisis hits, the responsibility of the ECB for this will become obvious," he wrote.

ziener.markus@gmail.com

Poll: Execs believe firms based key decisions on inaccurate data

Many corporate leaders believe their companies have made significant decisions based on inaccurate data, a new survey found.

It found that 70 per cent of those polled here identified the issue as a hidden problem, with 45 per cent stating their concern over errors that may not be visible yet must exist.

The poll noted 74 per cent believe that either they or their chief executive had made a significant decision based on out-of-date or incorrect financial data, with 18 per cent citing that this has "definitely occurred" in their firm.

Although 36 per cent claim to completely trust the accuracy of their own financial data in general, the poll found "a significant discrepancy" between the views of the C-suite and finance professionals.

While 40 per cent of those on the corporate floor claimed to completely trust the accuracy of their numbers, only 32 per cent of finance professionals said the same.

Meanwhile, 19 per cent of respondents stated they are not completely confident about identifying financial errors before reporting results.

There were also low confidence levels in ability to spot errors to ensure accurate reporting, with 62 per cent saying a firm they have worked for had to restate earnings due to inaccuracies in financial data that were not identified.

Only 27 per cent of respondents felt they could trust that their finance team had identified all errors to ensure accurate reporting.

They cite human error, the complexity of collecting and processing data, multiple data sources and clunky technology as contributing factors to their lack of trust.

Almost all of the Singapore respondents agreed that there would be fallout if data inaccuracies were not identified before reporting. This could include significant reputational damage, time spent reworking the accounts and an impact on their ability to secure additional investment.

The survey was commissioned by financial software provider BlackLine and polled 579 C-level and 575 finance professionals – including 50 from each group in Singapore – from large and mid-sized organisations in major economies.

BlackLine chief strategy officer Mario Spanicciati said high-profile misreporting scandals in the news could be just the "tip of a larger financial inaccuracy iceberg". He said that not only are reporting errors prevalent, but many of these inaccuracies remain below the surface.

"Unless there is recognition that this is an unacceptable and unnecessary level of risk, we can expect to see an increase in large-scale financial misreporting. Business leaders have a responsibility to ensure that the processes and technology are in place to enable continuous visibility and accuracy of financial data," he added.

Debt is roaring back in China

Leverage rising as govt shifts focus from containing $46 trillion debt pile to shoring up weak economic expansion

SHANGHAI • For almost two years, the question has lingered over China's market-roiling crackdown on financial leverage: How much pain can the country's policymakers stomach?

Evidence is mounting that their limit has been reached. From bank loans to trust product issuance to margin trading accounts at stock brokerages, leverage in China is rising nearly everywhere you look.

While seasonal effects explain some of the gains, analysts say the trend has staying power as the authorities shift their focus from containing the nation's US$34 trillion (S$46 trillion) debt pile to shoring up the weakest economic expansion since 2009.

"Deleveraging is dead," said Ms Alicia Garcia Herrero, chief Asia-Pacific economist at Natixis in Hong Kong.

The question now is whether China's attempt to create a healthier mix of financing – fewer shadow banks, longer debt maturities – will prove successful. Premier Li Keqiang underscored the challenge last week, warning of risks from sharp increases in short-term debt after China's credit growth surged to a record last month.

"Chinese regulators are now trying to walk a fine line by allowing credit to flow back into the private sector without returning to the old pattern of rapid and unsustainable credit growth," said Mr Nicholas Borst, a China research director at Seafarer Capital Partners in Larkspur, California.

Even after accounting for seasonal distortions, China's leverage indicators have been surprisingly strong so far this year:

- New yuan loans jumped by a record 3.23 trillion yuan (S$650 billion) last month, exceeding estimates;
- Shadow financing rose for the first time in 11 months; interbank borrowing climbed to a six-month high;
- More than 1,800 new trust products have been sold so far this year, the fastest start since at least 2008, according to Use Trust;
- Banks issued 22 per cent more wealth management products in January compared with the year-earlier period, according to PY Standard; and
- Margin debt in China's stock market surged over the past two weeks at the fastest pace since 2015.

It's a stark turnaround after a nearly two-year anti-leverage drive that sank Chinese stocks, restrained economic growth, triggered record bond defaults, and pummelled the nation's gargantuan shadow-banking industry.

China's overall leverage ratio stood at 243.7 per cent at the end of last year, with corporate debt reaching 154 per cent, household borrowings at 53 per cent and government leverage at 37 per cent, according to Mr Zhang Xiaojing, deputy head of the Institute of Economics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Before that, the nation's leverage ratio climbed at an average of 12 percentage points each year between 2008 and 2016.

In the latest sign of the government's evolving stance, a quarterly policy report published by the People's Bank of China (PBOC) on Thursday watered down language on the campaign to curb excess credit, removing a reference to deleveraging and adding wording on "stabilising the macro leverage ratio".

"China has shelved deleveraging activities almost entirely to support the economy," said Ms Iris Pang, a Hong Kong-based economist at ING Bank.

The PBOC and the China Banking and Insurance Regulatory Commission did not respond to faxed requests for comment.

The question now is whether China's attempt to create a healthier mix of financing – fewer shadow banks, longer debt maturities – will prove successful.

China's total debt will rise relative to gross domestic product this year, after a flat 2017 and a decline in 2018, Ms Wang Tao, head of China economic research at UBS Group in Hong Kong, predicted in a report this month.

While Ms Wang cautioned that "re-leveraging" may increase concerns about China's commitment to ensuring financial stability, investors have so far cheered the prospect of easier credit conditions.

Yields on lower-rated Chinese corporate bonds have dropped and the nation's stock market – one of the world's worst performers last year – has soared (thanks also to signs of progress in trade negotiations with the United States). The small-cap ChiNext Index entered a bull market on Friday.

"In 2018, it was the double whammy from the deleveraging campaign and the trade war," said Mr Larry Hu, head of China economics at Macquarie Securities in Hong Kong. "In 2019, it could be the interplay between softening growth and more supportive policy." BLOOMBERG

Frasers unit makes offer for Thai developer

A unit of Frasers Property Limited is making a conditional voluntary tender offer for a Thai property developer for about 19.75 billion baht (S$851.9 million) in cash.

The unit – Frasers Property (Thailand) or FPT – is offering 8.50 baht a share for about 2.32 billion shares to acquire Golden Land Property Development, it announced before markets opened yesterday.

The offer price may be reduced by the amount of dividend per share if Golden Land announces its dividend payment before the deal concludes.

The Frasers Thai unit already holds a 39.92 per cent stake in Golden Land.

The combined firms are expected to generate revenue in excess of 20 billion baht, with total assets above 80 billion baht.

Their resources will enable both firms to better capitalise on FPT's landbank, especially with sizeable projects in the pipeline in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor.

Golden Land would also be able to "immediately contribute" to FPT's financial performance through its portfolio of operating assets.

FPT president Sopon Racharaksa said FPT and Golden Land complement each other, giving the company multi-segment capabilities across the logistics, industrial and commercial space value chain.

"I see greater benefits to offer more breadth and depth in our service offerings. The enlarged scale will also enable us to attract the best talent and offer ... career opportunities for our staff across multiple asset classes," Mr Sopon added.

Golden Land has recorded revenue growth of 58 per cent since 2013 with new flagship development projects in Bangkok such as FYI Centre and Sathorn Square.

It also has stakes in hospitality assets, including Mayfair Marriott Executive Apartments, The Ascott Sathorn and Modena by Fraser Bangkok.

It has 41 active residential projects in Bangkok and its vicinity, and plans to launch 25 new projects valued at 26 billion baht this year.

A bridge to the high life in Chongqing

The 1.12 million sq m megastructure Raffles City Chongqing (left) is on track to open in the second half of this year in the Chinese city. The eighth and final skyscraper of the development was topped out on Jan 25, marking a milestone for Singapore-listed real estate developer CapitaLand. Two of the eight towers are, at 350m high, considered to be Chongqing's tallest buildings. Six of the towers are linked by an enclosed skybridge called The Crystal (above). Envisaged as the centre of civic activities where locals and visitors from around the world converge in Chongqing, The Crystal will house a rich array of amenities, including a viewing gallery, lush gardens, an infinity pool and restaurants. When darkness falls, it will transform into a giant light beam, illuminating the night sky with a pulsating light show. Raffles City Chongqing comprises a 235,000 sq m shopping mall, 150,000 sq m of Grade A office space and about 1,400 residential apartments, as well as the Ascott Raffles City Chongqing serviced residences and InterContinental Raffles City Chongqing hotel. The massive development, located at Chaotianmen at the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing rivers in Yuzhong district, has a gross floor area (excluding carparks) of about 817,000 sq m. PHOTO: CAPITALAND

PRIME CHINATOWN • FULL COMMERCIAL SHOPHOUSES

SOUTH BRIDGE ROAD

- 3-storey shophouse
- Rare full F&B approval
- Site area: Approx. 97.4 sq m / 1,049 sq ft
- Floor area: Approx. 250.8 sq m / 2,700 sq ft
- Excellent main road frontage
- Public car park at the back of the property
- Less than 200m from Chinatown MRT Interchange and Telok Ayer MRT stations

SAGO STREET

- 3-storey shophouse
- Site area: Approx. 103.9 sq m / 1,119 sq ft
- Floor area: Approx. 297.3 sq m / 3,200 sq ft
- Right next to the grand Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum
- Immediate catchment of tourists
- Less than 100m from the upcoming Maxwell MRT station

Contact Capital Markets

Yap Hui Yee (CEA Reg No. R041545Z) 9852 3687

Sophia Lim (CEA Reg No.: R056087E) 9878 2372

CBRE Agency License No.: L3002163I

Peace Centre / Peace Mansion – Mixed-Use Redevelopment Site

- Land 76,617 sf; LH 99 years; District 9
- MP Zoning 'Commercial'; 55m AMSL
- As built GPR 7.89; OPP for 60% comm & 40% resi
- Prominent dual-frontage to Selegie Rd & Sophia Rd
- Located in the civic, cultural & education precinct
- Short walking distance to 6 MRT Stations

TENDER CLOSING : 11 April 2019 (Thursday), 3.00pm

JLL

Tan Hong Boon CEA Reg No R001322Z 9684 0607

Yong Choon Fah CEA Reg No R001321A 9026 9021

Nicholas Ng CEA Reg No R021984G 9650 3761

Carin Puah CEA Reg No R027893B 9008 3502

Victor Zeng CEA Reg No R004088Z 8157 4783

Jones Lang LaSalle Property Consultants Pte Ltd CEA Licence No. L3007326E www.jll.com.sg

COLLECTIVE SALE OF PINE GROVE (D21)

Holland Rd Cluster
Educational Hub
Dual Frontage

* Subject to authorities' approval

- Residential Land 82,982.8 sqm (approx. 893,219 sqft)
- Master Plan 2014 Gross Plot Ratio 2.1 (up to 24 storey)*
- Potential Maximum Dwelling Units : 2,050* of units at minimum average size of 85 sqm
- Easily accessible via expressways / Clementi and Ulu Pandan Road
- Orchard Road / Holland Village and CBD within 10 minutes' drive away
- Proximity to several MRT Stations, Universities, Polytechnics, reputable schools and shopping malls

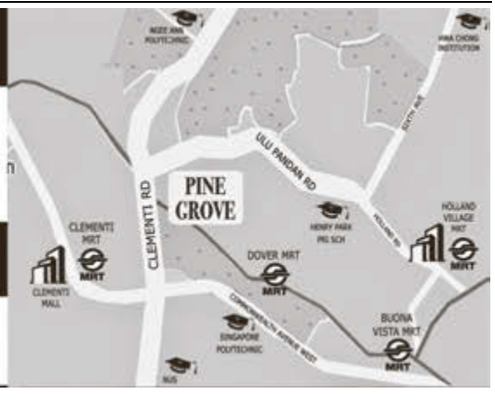
TENDER CLOSING DATE: 23rd APRIL 2019 (TUESDAY) 3:00 PM

C&H Group 兆城地产 CEA Licence No: L3007139C

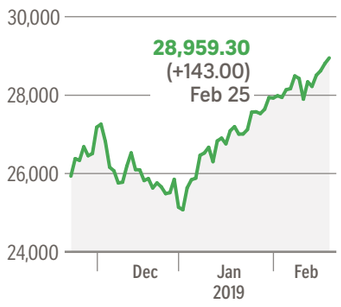
Joseph Tan (陈家祥) +65 8488 0234 CEA Reg No: R023267C

Yeo Chak Khng +65 8588 3388 CEA Reg No: R045233I

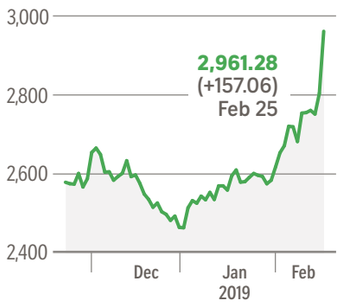
Freddy Choo (周光兴) +65 9367 1345 CEA Reg No: R023417Z



Hang Seng



Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225

Dow Jones

BullsAndBears

Early-session jump amid news on US tariffs

Some keep up surge to end the day higher, but rallies short-lived in other markets

Leila Lai

Markets across the region enjoyed an early-session jump yesterday on news of a deadline extension to the United States tariffs but the momentum dropped off in some bourses.

Markets in China, Japan and Australia sustained the surge to end the day higher but rallies were short-lived in other markets, including South Korea and Singapore.

The Straits Times Index (STI) declined through the morning to 3,252.66 then recovered to 3,272.35, up 2.45 points or 0.07 per cent. Turnover was 1.61 billion securities worth $1.27 billion. Losers outnumbered gainers 233 to 173.

The STI's lacklustre effort could have been due to "a touch of scepticism over trade issues", said FXTM research analyst Lukman Otunuga.

Another reason is that a trade resolution might not have as large a benefit for regional markets as for China, said Mr Olivier d'Assier, head of applied research for Asia-Pacific at Axioma.

He said many investors had expected periphery countries in Asia to benefit somewhat if the trade war continues or worsens, as tech supply chains would reroute through them.

"If there is a trade resolution, then Chinese-made goods no longer need to transit via other regional countries to reach the US and avoid tariffs," said Mr d'Assier. "So perhaps the muted reaction in regional exchanges other than Shanghai, Shenzhen or Hong Kong is a reflection of this."

Venture Corp led advancers on the STI, adding 12.28 per cent to $18.10 on a volume of nearly six million shares. This was on the back of full-year results last week that were in line with street expectations.

"Record R&D expenses and inventory levels – possible leading indicators for the group – coupled with strong earnings outlook by key customers provide confidence in Venture's ability to at least sustain its robust growth momentum over the medium term," wrote DBS analyst Carmen Tay in a Monday report.

Shares of direct-selling firm Best World International dived as much as 25.8 per cent at one point as it resumed trading after a halt that lasted nearly five days last week. It ended down 18.45 per cent at $2.21, with 29.5 million shares traded.

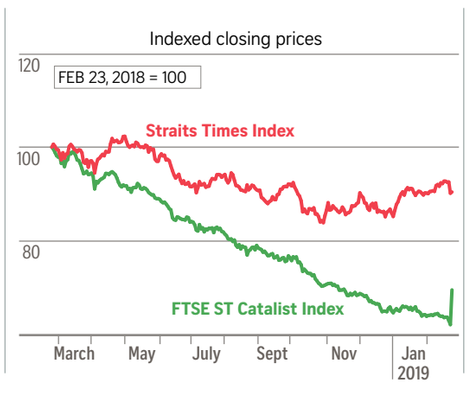
It had halted trading after a media report raised questions about its lack of clarity on how its franchisees operate in China. It said it would order an independent review of its business and accounting practices.

Shares of electronics manufacturer Hi-P International rose 8.77 per cent to $1.24. Maybank Kim Eng analyst Lai Gene Lih upgraded the counter to "hold" from "sell" yesterday as he believes that the worst of its pricing pressure issues are over.

leilal@sph.com.sg

DAILY

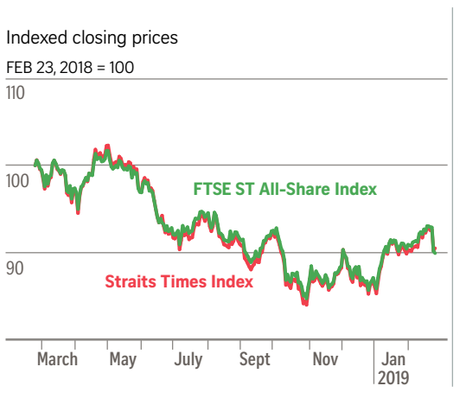
Straits Times Index
Feb 25, 2019
3,272.35 ▲
+2.45 (+0.07%)
Current streak
1 day
Day high
3,276.47
Day low
3,252.66
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)



FTSE ST Catalist Index
Feb 25, 2019
296.06 ▼
-3.32 (-1.11%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
299.17
Day low
295.99
52-week high
466.75 (Feb 26, 2018)
52-week low
296.06 (Feb 25, 2019)

DAILY

FTSE ST All-Share Index
Feb 25, 2019
792.69 ▼
-0.29 (-0.04%)
Current streak
3 days
Day high
794.13
Day low
788.92
52-week high
868.02 (April 30, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)



Ping An plans IPO of fintech unit in HK at $1.35b

HONG KONG • Ping An Insurance, China's largest insurer by market value, is gearing up for an initial public offering (IPO) of its OneConnect unit that could value the financial management portal at about US$8 billion (S$10.8 billion), according to people familiar with the matter.

Ping An is now targeting to list OneConnect in Hong Kong as early as the second half of this year, one of the people said, asking not to be identified because the information is private.

The share sale could raise roughly US$1 billion (S$1.35 billion). The insurance giant initially had a fundraising goal of as much as US$3 billion last year, before a volatile market forced it to push back the listing.

Ping An tempered its valuation expectations and may offer a smaller stake in the business after OneConnect's business performance was not as strong as initially projected, one person said.

A OneConnect spin-off and IPO would be one of the highest-profile deals in Hong Kong since a decelerating Chinese economy chilled public funding and the country's tech space.

It would boost Ping An's strategy to transform itself into a financial technology powerhouse.

Details of the OneConnect offering, including the valuation, could change depending on market sentiment, the people said.

OneConnect provides cloud computing and other technology services to small and medium-sized financial institutions. BLOOMBERG

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY TRADED	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
282	245	Ascendas Reit		282	+2	6788	5.7	1.4
194	161	CapitaCom Trust		194	+2	7748	4.5	1.1
380	298	CapitaLand		353	+7	13896	3.4	0.8
246	197	CapitaMall Trust		245	+1	7934	4.7	1.2
1359	780	CityDev		925 cd	-3	1871	2.2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro		245 cd	+1	5960	4.3	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp		2518 cd	+17	3049	4.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US	900	unch	161	2.3	-
133	85.5	Genting Sing		106	-1	44078	3.3	1.6
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res		28	-0.5	16862	2.9	0.7
37	23	HPH Trust USD	US	23.5	unch	11777	11.2	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US	729	+1	3171	2.7	0.3
7205	1099	JMH USD	US	6990	-131	247	2.3	0.7
4078	3155	JSH USD	US	3916	-112	285	0.8	0.4
3819	2766	Jardine C&C		3668	+24	191	3.1	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp		632 cd	-2	3219	4.7	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank		1133 cd	-6	7536	3.8	1.2
564	455	SATS		514	-1	1249	3.5	3.6
790	672	SGX		790	+3	1681	3.8	9.9
1184	914	SIA		1019	+2	895	3.9	1
292	231	SPH		251	+2	3750	5.2	1.1
379	321	ST Engineering		379 cd	+6	8987	4	5.3
328	243	Sembcorp Ind		265 cd	-2	5283	1.5	0.7
358	283	Singtel		308	+1	7128	6.7	1.7
88	57.5	ThaiBev		81.5	unch	29392	0.8	4
3037	2380	UOB		2539 cd	-19	4472	4.7	1.2
898	591	UOL		679	+3	1061	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp		1810 cd	+198	5987	3.9	2.2
340	297	Wilmar Intl		333 cd	+7	9582	3.2	1
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD		145	-1	12442	3.1	1.1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY TRADED	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
282	245	Ascendas Reit		282	+2	6788	5.7	1.4
120	105	Ascott Reit		114	-1	3703	6.3	1
74.5	59	Bumitama Agri		67	-1.5	272	1.1	1.6
178	143	CDL HTrust		159	-1	2799	-	1
194	161	CapitaCom Trust		194	+2	7748	4.5	1.1
380	298	CapitaLand		353	+7	13896	3.4	0.8
246	197	CapitaMall Trust		245	+1	7934	4.7	1.2
164	133	CapitaR China Tr		144	-1	1753	7.1	0.9
1359	780	CityDev		925 cd	-3	1871	2.2	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro		245 cd	+1	5960	4.3	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp		2518 cd	+17	3049	4.8	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US	900	unch	161	2.3	-
72.5	59	Far East HTrust		64	unch	1155	-	0.7
183	150	First Resources		169	-1	398	4	2.2
232	212	Frasers Cpt Tr		231	+1	465	5.2	111.1
114	101	Frasers L&I Tr		109	-1	9953	6.3	1.2
133	85.5	Genting Sing		106	-1	44078	3.3	1.6
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res		28	-0.5	16862	2.9	0.7
224	167	GuocoLand Ltd		186	+2	67	3.8	0.6
37	23	HPH Trust USD	US	23.5	unch	11777	11.2	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US	729	+1	3171	2.7	0.3
7205	1099	JMH USD	US	6990	-131	247	2.3	0.7
4078	3155	JSH USD	US	3916	-112	285	0.8	0.4
3819	2766	Jardine C&C		3668	+24	191	3.1	1.8
58	44.5	Kep Infra Tr		50	-0.5	2627	7.4	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp		632 cd	-2	3219	4.7	1
125	108	Keppel Reit		123	-1	5674	4.5	0.9
273	170	Man Oriental USD	US	203	-1	81	1.5	1.5
186	152	Mapletree Com Tr		176	-3	10917	5.1	1.2
206	184	Mapletree Ind Tr		199	-1	1770	5.9	1.3
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr		139	-1	6925	5.5	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr		126	+2	4492	5.9	1
82.5	73	NetLink NBN Tr		79.5	unch	2308	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank		1133 cd	-6	7536	3.8	1.2
195	136	OUE		158	-1	192	1.9	0.4
87	64.5	OUE HTrust		71.5	-0.5	1330	-	1
250	157	Olam Intl		202	+1	1208	3.7	1
59	28	Oxley		33.5	-0.5	1770	4.5	1
288	256	ParkwayLife Reit		285	+1	1068	4.5	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical		112	+1	3935	2	2.6
564	455	SATS		514	-1	1249	3.5	3.6
790	672	SGX		790	+3	1681	3.8	9.9
1184	914	SIA		1019	+2	895	3.9	1
335	220	SIA Engineering		236	unch	410	5.5	1.8
292	231	SPH		251	+2	3750	5.2	1.1
103	98	SPHREIT		102	-1	371	5.4	1.1
379	321	ST Engineering		379 cd	+6	8987	4	5.3
328	243	Sembcorp Ind		265 cd	-2	5283	1.5	0.7
235	149	Sembcorp Marine		172	-4	8984	-	1.6
57	39	Silverlake Axis		53 xd	-0.5	1150	5.7	7.7
142	88.5	SingPost		101	-1	3579	3.5	1.3
358	283	Singtel		308	+1	7128	6.7	1.7
253	158	StarHub		159	-2	8127	10.1	5
73.5	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit		69.5	-0.5	4605	6.5	0.8
199	163	Suntec Reit		194	+2	6540	5.1	0.9
88	57.5	ThaiBev		81.5	unch	29392	0.8	4
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical		7.9	unch	22947	-	2.9
3037	2380	UOB		2539 cd	-19	4472	4.7	1.2
898	591	UOL		679	+3	1061	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp		1810 cd	+198	5987	3.9	2.2
340	297	Wilmar Intl		333 cd	+7	9582	3.2	1
224	183	Wing Tai		204	-1	290	3.9	0.5
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD		145	-1	12442	3.1	1.1
182	116	Yanlord Land		144	-1	2726	4.7	0.6

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD %	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	138	unch	243	7.5	1
68.5	48	Accordia Golf Tr	62.5	+2.5	866	6.2	0.7
86.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	84.5	-0.5	426	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	115	-1	641	5.3	1.3
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.1 cd	-0.2	5901	49.6	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	59.5	unch	125	1.7	0.8
333	115	Best World	221	-50	29486	1.9	7.9
85.5	76	Boustead	81	-0.5	86	3.7	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	87 cd	-0.5	173	1.7	3
632	521	Bukit Sembawang	568	-8	70	3.2	1.1
85	65.5	Cache Log Trust	71	-1	2769	8.3	1.1
52	39.5	Centurion	41	-0.5	41	6.1	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	135	+2	774	3.3	1.1
46	29.5	China Everbright	35	-0.5	1040	2.8	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunsine	133	+2	1811	2.3	1.5
103	64	Chip Eng Seng	74 cd	+1.5	4904	5.4	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	37	unch	4514	-	1.6
700	302	Delong	569	+3	6	-	0.6
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	19.6	-0.2	218	9.4	1.2
77.5	67.5	EC World Reit	76.5 cd	+1	1198	8.1	0.9
58.5	47	ESR-REIT	54	+0.5	2492	7.1	1.2
140	92	First Reit	106	unch	991	8.1	1
152	135	Frasers Com Tr	149	unch	2042	6.4	1
79.5	66.5	Frasers HTrust	72.5	-0.5	399	-	1
25.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	18.6	-0.1	190	5.4	1.1
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	80	+0.5	1341	3.5	2.4
67.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	54.5	-0.5	241	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	124	+10	15335	4	1.8
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	274	+3	66	4.7	0.7
80.5	71	IREIT Global	76.5 cd	-0.5	143	7.3	1
36.5	18.3	Indofood Agri	22.5	+0.5	396	-	0.3
84	43	Japfa	81.5	unch	1947	0.6	1.5
76	49	KSH	51.5	-0.5	20	4.3	0.9
85	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	66.5	unch	357	9.4	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	146	-1	3320	5	1.4
190	132	Keppel T&T	188	-1	37	-	1.2
11.9	7	KrisEnergy	8.1	+0.1	8775	-	1
69	44.5	Lian Beng	50	+0.5	269	4.5	0.4
40.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	20.5 cd	-2.5	12817	10	0.7
53	26	MM2 Asia	27	unch	1552	-	1.5
95	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	83.5	-0.5	1267	6.7	0.7
120	95	Metro	100	unch	320	5	0.6
19	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
63.4	45	OUE Com Reit	50.5	+0.5	378	6.9	0.7
65	54	PEC	55.5	unch	319	3.6	0.6
39	17	POSH	18.3	-0.7	90	-	0.7
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	48	+0.5	80	3.4	3.4
108	55.5	QAF Ltd	69	unch	60	7.2	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	111	-1	57	2.1	3.6
54.5	22	SIIC Environment	37	unch	335	-	0.6
45	38.5	Sabana Reit	42	-0.5	1450	7.6	0.7
119	92.5	Sheng Siong	108	unch	850	3.1	6
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	6.3	+0.5	5294	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	60	+0.5	327	8.8	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	93	+2.5	1259	-	0.8
46	32.5	Tuan Sing	39 cd	unch	484	2.3	0.4
136	54	UMS	71	+0.5	4576	7	1.7
112	58.5	Valuetronics	71.5	unch	8081	6.4	1.6
15	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.5	unch	3556	-	0.3
48.5	24	Yoma Strategic	34	unch	1912	0.7	0.9
33	16.1	Yongnam	17.4	unch	516	-	0.3

ETFs

52-Week High	52-Week Low	Counter	Last Sale	+/-	Vol ('000)	Last Quote Buy	Last Quote Sell
116.9	110	ABF SG Bond ETF	113.6	-	130	113.5	113.8
93.8	82.5	CIMB APAC Div US$	US88.8	-	-	92.1	92.9
1176	626	CIMBASEAN40 US$	US1005	-5	1	1006	1014
12851	11025	GLD US$	US12528	+26	19	12511	12550
1402	1330	IS ASIA HYG S$D	1392cd	-	-	1385	1391
1070	970	IS ASIA HYG US$	US1032cd	+9	1	1024	1032
1057	1002	IS Asia BND US	US1044cd	+2	0	1044	1049
1016	467	IS MS INDIA US$	US824	+11	2	825	828
104.2	94.4	Lion-Phillip S-REIT	104.2	+0.4	186	103.7	104.2
375	302	Nikko AM STI ETF	334	-	10	334	335
102	98.8	NikkoAM SGD IGBond ETF	100.3	-0.1	21	100.1	100.3
86	76.3	NikkoAM-STC A_REIT US$	US86	-	-	88.1	88.4
148.2	104.7	NikkoAM-STC Asia REIT	119.2	+0.2	194	119	119.4
107.2	99	PHILSING INC	106.7	-0.1	25	106.8	107
130	93.2	Phil Ap Div Reit US$	US105.2	+0.2	8	104.9	105.3
365.8	300	STI ETF	327	-	187	327	327.3
4164	3373	XT ASX200 US$	US3822	-	-	3850	3895
685.5	375.1	XT MSBrazil US$	US513.1	-	-	529.7	535.2
2090	1470	XT MSCHINA US$	US1780	+15	10	1780	1792
8311	6252	XT MSKorea US$	US7002	-	-	7015	7135
203.6	154.9	XT MSPHILS US$	US190	-	-	186	199
634	530	XT MSPacXJp US$	US607	-	-	613	620
3014	2532	XT MSTaiwan US$	US2640	-	-	2715	2750
5292	4210	XT S&P500 US$	US5092	-	-	5070	5130
4044	2850	XT Vietnam US$	US3450	+47	1	3349	-

Gainers

BY CENTS

	CLOSE	UP	%
Venture Corp	1810	198.0	12.3
Jardine C&C	3668	24.0	0.7
DBS Grp	2518	17.0	0.7
Haw Par Corp	1240	12.0	1.0
SBS Transit	339	11.0	3.4
Hi-P Intl	124	10.0	8.8
CapitaLand	353	7.0	2.0
Great Eastern	2641	7.0	0.3
Wilmar Intl	333	7.0	2.1
Shangri-La HKD	1098	6.9	3.8

BY PERCENTAGE

	CLOSE	%	UP
Renaissance United	0.2	100.0	0.1
Accrelist	0.4	33.3	0.1
New Wave	0.8	33.3	0.2
Oceanus	0.4	33.3	0.1
Parkson Retail	2.3	27.8	0.5
KLW Hldgs	0.6	20.0	0.1
OEL	0.6	20.0	0.1
TEE Land	16.5	16.2	2.3
Avarga	23.5	14.6	3.0
Jasper Inv	0.8	14.3	0.1

Losers

BY CENTS

	CLOSE	DOWN	%
JMH USD	6990	-176.9	-1.8
JSH USD	3916	-151.3	-2.8
Best World	221	-50.0	-18.5
UOB	2539	-19.0	-0.7
SEVAK	360	-11.0	-3.0
Asia Vets	9.1	-10.9	-54.5
HPL	371	-9.0	-2.4
Bukit Sembawang	568	-8.0	-1.4
Grand Banks	23	-7.0	-23.3
Powermatic Data	153	-7.0	-4.4

BY PERCENTAGE

	CLOSE	% DOWN
P5 Capital	0.5	-82.1 -2.3
Asia Vets	9.1	-54.5 -10.9
LionGold	0.1	-50.0 -0.1
JCG Investment	0.2	-33.3 -0.1
Rich Capital	0.3	-25.0 -0.1
Seroja Inv	2.5	-24.2 -0.8
Grand Banks	23	-23.3 -7.0
TSH	28	-20.0 -7.0
Compact Metal	1.7	-19.0 -0.4
Best World	221	-18.5 -50.0

Most active

	VOLUME
Advanced Systems	72,000,000
Rex Intl	48,111,500
RHT HealthTrust	47,653,300
Genting Sing	44,078,700
Best World	29,486,300
ThaiBev	29,392,900
Spackman	28,404,000
Ezion	28,067,500
Thomson Medical	22,947,700
AEM	22,501,900
Market volume	1,604,947,000

	VALUE ($)
UOB	113,774,132
Venture Corp	105,507,853
OCBC Bank	85,301,740
DBS Grp	76,651,836
Best World	68,346,982
CapitaLand	48,463,424
Genting Sing	46,979,314
ST Engineering	33,926,327
Wilmar Intl	31,723,582
HongkongLand USD	31,197,743
Market value	1,210,999,000

Price and volume movers

	VOL	CLOSE($)	CHANGE	+/-
Avarga	2,834.7	0.235	+0.030	+14.63
TEE Land	452.0	0.165	+0.023	+16.20
Cheung Woh	12.1	0.123	-0.027	-18.00
Best World	29,486.3	2.210	-0.500	-18.45
Seroja Inv	107.6	0.025	-0.008	-24.24
Plastoform	230.0	0.010	-0.001	-9.09
Jasper Inv	11,100.2	0.008	+0.001	+14.29
King Wan	30.0	0.119	-0.013	-9.85
LionGold	11,329.9	0.001	-0.001	-50.00
Informatics	23.8	0.046	+0.004	+9.52

Shows the stocks with the highest combination of price change and of daily activity relative to the three-month average volume

Bonds

Company	Last Sale	+or-	Vol ('000)
CapMallTrb3.08%21022	101.2	-0.3	35
CityDev NCCPS	108	-5	1
DBS Bk 4.7% NCPS	10500	+10	1
FPTrea 3.65%n220522	101.3	-0.4	80
Hyflux 6% CPS	6537	susp	-
UE Pref	190	-	-

An artist's impression showing the LNG bunker vessel to be built by Sembcorp Marine by 2021 for a Mitsui OSK Lines subsidiary. PHOTO: LMG MARIN

Sembcorp Marine secures new contracts worth $175m

It will build LNG vessel for MOL; repair, modernise 13 cruise ships

Sembcorp Marine has secured new contracts worth an estimated $175 million to design and build a liquefied natural gas (LNG) bunker vessel, and for the repair and modernisation of 13 cruise ships.

The LNG vessel will be built for a subsidiary of Mitsui OSK Lines (MOL) at the Sembcorp Marine Tuas Boulevard Yard.

The 112m-long craft will be the largest of its kind to be built here in terms of size and LNG tank capacity, said SembMarine. It is also the company's first LNG bunker vessel construction project.

SembMarine said it will fabricate the vessel's membrane tanks, which will have a combined 12,000-cubic-metre capacity, under a licensing agreement with French LNG containment specialist GTT.

The vessel will be chartered to Pavilion Gas, a subsidiary of Pavilion Energy, for deployment in Singapore once it is completed in 2021.

In a separate announcement yesterday, Pavilion Energy, a wholly-owned unit of Temasek Holdings, said it was awarded a $3 million grant under a Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore programme that will go towards building the bunker vessel.

Pavilion Energy and Total Marine Fuels Global Solutions, a subsidiary of French energy giant Total, have also agreed to co-share utilisation of the vessel.

The 112m-long craft will be the largest of its kind to be built here in terms of size and LNG tank capacity, said Sembcorp Marine. It is also the company's first LNG bunker vessel construction project.

There is a growing interest among shipowners in opting for LNG as a marine fuel as the global shipping industry looks to adapt to stricter emissions standards, said Pavilion Energy.

SembMarine has also partnered Carnival Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International, Star Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, and Star Clippers Monaco for 13 new cruise vessel repair and modernisation projects. The projects will be executed at its Admiralty and Tuas Boulevard yards.

The firm expects a positive contribution to its earnings from the contracts, but they are not expected to have any material impact on net tangible assets and earnings per share for the year ending Dec 31, 2019.

SembMarine president and chief executive Wong Weng Sun said the LNG bunker vessel project "will be a sophisticated new-building that not only delivers optimal technical performance, but also helps MOL and Pavilion Energy contribute to the expected standard of LNG bunkering operations in Singapore".

CompanyBriefs

PropNex

Home-grown real estate agency PropNex reported a near 58 per cent year-on-year drop in fourth-quarter net profit to $1.83 million as sales were hurt by the cooling measures implemented in July last year.

Revenue was around 16 per cent lower at $83 million as revenue recognition for the number of units transacted in the third quarter – which slumped on the back of the cooling measures – took place in the fourth quarter.

Earnings per share for the quarter under review worked out to 0.49 cent per share, down from 1.41 cents a year ago.

For its full year, net profit was up 19.3 per cent to $19.41 million in line with the higher top line. Revenue for FY2018 jumped 30 per cent to $431.54 million, led by higher commission income from agency services and project marketing services.

As at Sunday, PropNex's sales force had grown to 7,513, up from 6,684 as at Jan 1 last year.

The agency has declared a final dividend of 1.5 cents per share and a special dividend of two cents per share, subject to approval at an upcoming annual general meeting.

Ho Bee Land

A $20.3 million provision for a potential tax liability caused Ho Bee Land's fourth-quarter net profit to fall 20.5 per cent to $81.4 million.

The authorities raised an additional tax assessment last year on the group's gain on sale of Hotel Windsor in 2013, though Ho Bee said that it has objected to the assessment based on professional advice.

For the three months ended Dec 31, revenue jumped 22.8 per cent to $147.9 million from the previous year.

This resulted from higher rental revenue from Ropemaker Place, which was acquired on June 15 last year, as well as a net fair value gain of $93 million on its investment properties in the United Kingdom and Singapore – 19.2 per cent higher than in the same quarter a year ago.

For the quarter, earnings per share was at 12.24 cents, down from 15.39 cents in the year-ago period.

For the year, net profit rose 8.3 per cent to $270 million, and earnings per share rose to 40.58 cents, up from 37.44 cents.

Ho Bee is recommending a dividend of 10 cents per ordinary share, comprising a first and final dividend of eight cents per share and a special dividend of two cents per share. This is the same as last year.

Its shares closed unchanged at $2.51 yesterday.

Raffles Medical's full-year profit inches up 0.4% to $71m

Raffles Medical Group has posted a net profit of $71.1 million for 2018, up 0.4 per cent from $70.8 million the previous year.

The group notched a 7.8 per cent rise in Ebitda (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation).

This was offset by higher tax expense and additional depreciation from the completion of Raffles Specialist Centre, which adjoins Raffles Hospital Singapore, early last year.

Revenue for the 12 months to Dec 31 was $489.1 million, up 2.4 per cent from $477.6 million for 2017.

This was led by healthcare services revenue, which rose 6 per cent on the back of contributions from a new contract to provide air borders screening services, as well as new corporate clients.

Revenue from hospital services slipped 0.8 per cent, partly due to the refurbishment of existing inpatient facilities last year.

The group announced a final dividend of two cents per share, up from 1.75 cents for 2017. Including an interim dividend of 0.5 cent per share paid in September last year, total dividends for the full year amount to 2.5 cents.

Full-year earnings per share was 3.98 cents, down from 4.02 cents for 2017. Net asset value per share was 44.54 cents as at Dec 31 last year, up from 41.45 cents as at Dec 31, 2017.

The group said that barring unforeseen circumstances, it will grow its revenue and remain profitable this year, notwithstanding the anticipated start-up loss for Raffles Hospital Chongqing.

Raffles Hospital Chongqing opened its doors on Jan 2, and will progressively provide more inpatient beds and other facilities.

Meanwhile, Raffles Hospital Singapore will proceed with the renovation of the existing hospital building, which is expected to be completed by the middle of this year.

The expansion will enable Raffles Hospital Singapore to meet market growth for the coming years, the group said.

Construction of Raffles Hospital Shanghai in Pudong is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of this year.

Interbank currency rates

Feb 25

Currencies	Against S$ Bid	Against S$ Offer	Against US$ Bid	Against US$ Offer
S$/US$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9657	0.9664	0.7151	0.7153
Canadian dollar	1.0283	1.0288	0.7615	0.7614
Euro	1.5319	1.5330	1.1343	1.1347
NZ dollar	0.9274	0.9283	0.6867	0.6871
Sterling pound	1.7651	1.7663	1.3070	1.3074
US dollar	1.3505	1.3510	-	-
S$/US$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.1552	20.1696	14.9243	14.9294
Danish kroner	20.5324	20.5432	15.2036	15.2059
Hong Kong dollar	17.21	17.21	12.7410	12.7411
Indian Rupee	1.90	1.90	1.4073	1.4074
Indonesia rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	1.2203	1.2211	0.9036	0.9038
Korean won	0.1205	0.1206	0.0892	0.0892
Malaysian ringgit	33.15	33.19	24.5459	24.5640
New Taiwan dollar	4.3876	4.3894	3.2489	3.2490
Norwegian krone	15.7172	15.7303	11.6381	11.6435
Philippine peso	2.5951	2.5981	1.9216	1.9231
Saudi riyal	36.0085	36.0247	26.6631	26.6652
Swedish krona	14.4952	14.5068	10.7332	10.7378
Swiss franc	135.0905	135.1946	100.0300	100.0700
Thai Baht	4.3133	4.3177	3.1939	3.1959

Source: OCBC

Government securities

GOVERNMENT BONDS — Feb 25

Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	Day's High	Day's Low
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.94	0.00	0.00
5-Year	N519100A	2.000%	01-Feb-24	100.00	100.07	100.03
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.8	0.00	0.00
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	111.92	0.00	0.00
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	97.19	97.40	97.40
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	102.95	0.00	0.00

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MSCI INDICES

Feb 22	Index	In local curr % dy Change	In local curr % yr Change
World Preliminary	1595.8	0.4	10.7
EAFE Preliminary	1097.9	0.1	8.9
Europe Preliminary	1533.0	0.2	9.1
Australia	1235.5	0.4	8.3
Austria Preliminary	548.8	-0.1	10.2
Belgium Preliminary	1008.0	-1.6	10.2
Canada Preliminary	2052.4	0.4	12.1
Denmark Preliminary	8124.5	0.3	9.7
Finland Preliminary	721.8	0.2	10.5
France Preliminary	1883.8	0.4	9.9
Germany Preliminary	911.1	0.1	8.0
Greece Preliminary	47.8	0.0	10.1
India	1255.2	0.5	-0.6
Indonesia	7265.0	-1.0	2.7
Ireland Preliminary	197.8	-0.3	10.4
Israel Preliminary	253.3	0.4	9.8
Italy Preliminary	686.6	0.3	10.4
Japan	963.3	-0.2	7.8
Korea	670.2	0.0	10.9
Malaysia	598.2	-0.6	2.8
Netherlands Preliminary	1644.0	0.3	12.8
New Zealand	143.0	0.1	7.8
Norway Preliminary	3002.7	0.6	7.8
Pakistan	406.3	0.3	13.8
Philippines	1352.0	0.5	7.1
Portugal Preliminary	88.3	0.2	9.3
Singapore	1692.6	-0.4	6.2
Singapore Free	363.9	-0.4	6.2

Source: MSCI

OBITUARIES

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES
1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

LIM HUA MIN

Age: 84

passed away peacefully on 25 February 2019.

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Chua Seok Khim

Sons:
Lim Boon Ann, Lance
Lim Boon Heng, Marcus

Daughters:
Lim Woon Lan, Mylene
Lim Woon Cheng, Detong

Grandchildren:
Jack Lim Jirapong
J Lim Surachet
Travis Lim
Thadeus Lim

Daughters-in-law:
Anthika Thongkaew
Mary Sng

Sons-in-law:
Lee Chin Chuan
Günter Paul Mayer

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at 47 Siang Kuang Avenue, S'pore 347969.
Cortege will leave on Friday, 1 March 2019 at 10am for cremation at Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 at 11am.

Our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the family of the late Founder of Min Seng Auto Pte Ltd

LIM HUA MIN

Departed on 25 February 2019

From :
The Management and Staff of Min Seng Auto Pte Ltd

In respect of the demise of our Founder, our company will be closed on 1st March 2019, Friday

---

"Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6

CHIA LEE HOW LAWRENCE

Age: 86

was called home to be with the Lord on 25 February 2019, leaving behind loved ones.

Wife: Tjiu Leh Eng Jacqueline (Deceased)

Son:
Chia Cheow Kheng Ignatius

Daughter-in-law:
Loh Sok Bee Angeline

Daughters:
Chia Cheow Suan Felicitas
Chia Cheow Gek Marian

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Blk 10D Braddell Hill, S'pore 579723.
Nightly prayers will be held at 8pm.
Cortege leaves on Friday, 1 March 2019 at 10am for funeral mass at Church of the Risen Christ, 91 Toa Payoh Central, Singapore 319193 at 10.30am and thereafter for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 12.05pm.

CHEN YUE XIN, GEMIN 陈玥心

Age: 55

passed away peacefully on 24-02-2019
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Lim Wei Lip Philip

Sons:
Lim Jing Kang, Benton
Lim Jing Yu, Markus

And all relatives and friends

Body is resting at Blk 665 Jalan Damai Singapore 410665

Cortege will leave on 28-02-2019 (Thursday) at 12.40pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 1.40pm

---

Guided by Compassion and Respect for All

OUR PROMISE
We practice fair and transparent pricing that caters to your budget and needs. Contact us anytime and we will always do our best for you.

OUR SERVICES
- Will Writing
- Grief Counselling
- Repatriation
- Imported Caskets
- Memorial Hall
- Funeral Packages from $4,999
- Personalised Funerals
- Pro-bono Funerals
- State Funerals

Funeral Services Direct 郑海船 生命礼仪

127 Lavender Street
Singapore 338735

info@directfuneral.com.sg
www.directfuneral.com.sg

24-HOUR HELPLINE +65 6555 1115

Share the message of farewell with loved ones & friends

STClassifieds

Download the free ST Classifieds App.
Tap on "Obituaries" within the App.
You can search for notices published in the last 30 days and share it via email, SMS or social media.

Available on the App Store
Google play

STClassifieds

Find today's *obituaries* online

Death announcements in The Straits Times are now digitised to make it easier for the deceased's next-of-kin to share news of the demise of their loved one.
Find the online version of the obituaries published today at: **www.obits.sg/today** or **scan the QR code**.
To enquire about this service, please contact **+65 6319 5192**.

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES
1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

OBITUARIES

Obituaries

For enquiries, call

1800-289-9988
(weekdays 8.30am to 6.30pm)

◆

6319-5192

STClassifieds

Fr William Heng CSsR

30 May 1954 - 15 February 2019

The Heng family and the Redemptorists wish to thank everyone
for your tremendous support and encouragement
during the memorial service and celebration of the life of Fr. William Heng.
It brought great comfort to us and to all who attended.

We wish to acknowledge The Assisi Hospice, St. Joseph's Home, all doctors
and caregivers and Holy Spirit Bereavement for your selfless service.

We also thank Archbishop William Goh, priests and religious, relatives and friends,
and the ministries of Novena Church for your prayers, presence and generosity.

You persevered even when a cure was not to be.
So the Lord wrapped his arms around you
and whispered "Come to Me." Hallelujah.

God bless you all.

With Deepest Sympathy and
Heartfelt Condolences
To The Family of The Late

Lyn Holloway

Former CEO of SPH (1984 -1985)

From
Board of Directors,
Management and Staff of
Singapore Press Holdings Limited

sph

Safe in the arms of Jesus.
Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me, though he die,
yet shall he live". *(John 11:25)*

8th Anniversary
With fond memories of

NG EWE

Departed 26 February 2011

Deeply missed by parents & family

Our hearts are sore
As time goes by we miss you more.
Your loving smile, your gentle face,
No one can fill your vacant place.
He will always be in our thoughts & prayers forever

" Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever."
Psalm 23:6 (ESV)

Chan Meng Kwong John

Age: 71

Was called home to be with the Lord on 24 February 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Yoon Tai Yaw Annie

Son:
Chan Weng Kin Daniel

Daughter:
Chan Mei Yi Marie

Granddaughter:
Ow Ying Hui Christel

Daughter-in-law:
Koh Lay Leng Nancy

Son-in-law:
Ow Gan Pin

Grandsons:
Ow Liong Kai Samuel
Ow Liong Zing Silas

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at Block 25 Dover Crescent, Multi Purpose Hall, Singapore 130025.

Nightly services will be held at 8.00pm.

Encoffining on Thursday 28 February 2019 at 8.30am, thereafter cortege leaves at 9.30am for cremation at Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 at 10.20am.

ॐ

Radha Kumaran Nair

Age: 76

Passed away peacefully on 25 February 2019.

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband:
Jayasimhan Pillai (deceased)

Brothers:
Krishnan Nair
Vijayan Nair
Ravindran Nair
Suchilan Nair
Rajeevan Nair
Balagopalan Nair

Sisters-in-law:
Evelyn Ong Hong Heng
Panchali Devi

K. Radha

Sisters:
Devi Nair
Lalitha Nair

Brothers-in-law:
Sasidharan Nambiar
Segaran Rajoo

Nephews / Nieces and their spouses:
Chitralekha & Ajith, Smita & Josh, Padmini & Ashokkumar, Suchitra & Thanaraj, Meera & Troy, Dhatchaini & Sankar, Dheepa & Shankar, Divian, Karthigayan & Priya, Keeran, Dinesh and Pritheeba & Vignish

Grand Nephews and Grand Nieces:
Shiriya, Jaya Lakshmi, Julien Sashi, Akshay, Sharvin, Shruthii, Suvaathi, Shant, Sasha, Isabella, Oliver and Arya

And all relatives and friends.

She is resting at Block 639 Woodlands Ring Road #11-33, Singapore 730639. Tel: 9244 4211

Cortege leaves on Tuesday 26 February 2019 at 5.00pm for cremation at Mandai Crematorium.

Memory wanders
as shadows fall
Back to the days
of happiness,
Days beyond recall.
A vision comes before us,
So calm, so dear,
so sweet,
Of her lips now silent
And whose lids are
closed in sleep.

新加坡殡仪馆 专业殡仪服务自1920年 Dedicated Funeral Director Since 1920
SINGAPORE CASKET CO (PTE) LTD
131 Lavender Street Singapore 338737 www.singaporecasket.com.sg

Newly Renovated Parlours Are Open For Booking

- Parlour and Tentage service available (HDB void deck & open space)
- One-stop Funeral Services for all religions within your budget
- Homeland Journey – Worldwide Repatriation with minimal waiting time
- Final Resting Place – Luxury Columbarium Niche

+65 6293 4388
24-Hours Hotline

New E-Class Mercedes Hearse

We make a living by what we get.
We make a life by what we give.

Sir Winston Churchill

Loved ones who have passed away live on in our hearts and minds. Honour their memories through an In Memoriam advertisement. **Call 1800 289 9988 to find out more.**

STClassifieds

SPORT

JONNY BROWNLEE TELLS ROHIT BRIJNATH ABOUT SUFFERING AS A TRIATHLETE **C8**

KEPA 'SHOULD BE SACKED'

Chelsea goalkeeper blasted for refusing to be substituted; Sarri plays down 'misunderstanding'

LONDON • For Chelsea, the mutiny. For Manchester City, the bounty. A humdrum League Cup final won 4-3 on penalties by City after a goal-less finish will be remembered more for the dramatic events late on in extra time.

Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga refused to leave the field when summoned to the bench by his manager Maurizio Sarri, who wanted to bring on Willy Caballero, a known penalty specialist.

It was an unprecedented sight on Sunday, but one that brought swift and unanimous condemnation.

Pundit Chris Sutton lashed out at the Spain international, telling BBC Sport "Kepa should be sacked".

The former Blues forward said: "I've seen players disgruntled before and throw a boot or their shirt down when they're taken off, but players know the rules.

"That should be his last performance in a Chelsea shirt. He's a disgrace, never seen anything like it.

"If I were Sarri, I would walk. You can't be undermined... It's not just Kepa who has disrespected Sarri, it's the Chelsea players."

Chelsea great John Terry felt Kepa's blatant dissent had subverted the Italian's authority.

He told Sky Sports: "Once your number goes up, you have to come off. It's a cloud over Chelsea's display after they played so well."

However, both Kepa and Sarri were on the same page afterwards, with the £71.6 million (S$126.3 million) summer signing issuing a statement on social media.

He tweeted: "At no time has it been my intention to disobey the coach or any of his decisions. The coach thought I was not in a position to play and my intention was to express I was good to continue helping the team. I have full respect for the coach and his authority."

Sarri also portrayed the furore as "a big misunderstanding", insisting: "I understood there was a problem and we needed a change. I understood he had cramp but the problem was not cramp, so he was able to go to penalties."

However, pundits were not buying the official line after Sarri, who had to be restrained by defender Antonio Rudiger, was seen repeatedly gesturing at Kepa to come off before storming down the tunnel.

Former Chelsea midfielder Craig Burley questioned on Twitter if that was the case, then "why Sarri was still trying to kill him just before the pens".

Ex-Chelsea player Ruud Gullit also claimed it was simply "a political answer for the newspapers".

Kepa did go on to save Leroy Sane's spot kick, but should have done better when Sergio Aguero's penalty slipped underneath him.

Chelsea fans were left wondering what could have been, had Caballero, who according to the Mirror has saved 11 out of 38 spot kicks in his career, come on.

City captain Vincent Kompany was relieved his former teammate was not fielded for the shoot-out, saying: "I know how good Caballero is on penalties. Last time, he won it (the 2016 Cup) for us so I didn't want him on."

While Pep Guardiola was "happy to win back-to-back in this competition for the first time in our history", it came at a cost with Fernandinho and Aymeric Laporte out injured for the "next few weeks".

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE GUARDIAN, THE TIMES, LONDON

Two other defiant goalkeepers

LES SEALEY (MAN UNITED)

Sealey was the first goalkeeper who refused to leave the pitch during an English League Cup final. But, unlike Kepa Arrizabalaga, Sealey's actions against Sheffield Wednesday in the 1991 final was for a worthy cause.

The Englishman suffered a badly gashed knee with 12 minutes remaining and United's then physio Jim McGregor told him there was no way that he would be able to carry on playing.

At the time, there was no reserve goalkeeper on the bench which meant that one of the outfield players had to replace Sealey in goal.

Sealey refused to come off and won the argument with McGregor. He conceded no further goals, but John Sheridan's 37th-minute strike was enough for Wednesday to lift the Cup with a 1-0 victory.

LUKASZ FABIANSKI (SWANSEA)

Swansea were leading 1-0 when goalkeeper Fabianski injured himself in a collision with Tottenham striker Vincent Janssen in the 81st minute of an English Premier League match in 2017.

Then Swans manager Paul Clement told reserve custodian Kristoffer Nordfeldt to get ready, but Fabianski insisted he was fine and play resumed. When Clement decided to replace Fabianski in the 86th minute, the Pole refused.

After continued remonstrations, Clement cancelled the change, and Jon Moss – coincidentally the referee in charge of Sunday's League Cup final between Chelsea and Manchester City – waved play on.

In the end, Fabianski bizarrely conceded three goals in the final minutes as the Swans lost 3-1.

Clockwise from above: Chelsea goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga watching in despair as Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero's spot kick in the League Cup final shoot-out slips under his body and into the net.

Earlier, the Spaniard, seen remonstrating with teammate David Luiz, had refused to be substituted towards the end of extra time.

His act of insubordination drew an animated response from his manager Maurizio Sarri as City went on to win 4-3 on penalties. PHOTOS: REUTERS

Commentary

Suffering Sarri left to ponder what might have been

Alyson Rudd

LONDON • It was about to be Maurizio Sarri's cherry on the cake moment, his reconnection with the Chelsea fans.

The head coach had made two very popular, crowd-pleasing substitutions in the form of Callum Hudson-Odoi and Ruben Loftus-Cheek.

They are players who had come through the club's youth ranks, who had been wondering if they have a long-term future under Sarri – yet here they were contributing in a final, bringing the team much needed zest.

As penalties beckoned, he had one substitution left and he looked to be very astute about it.

Willy Caballero has an excellent penalty record, saving 41 per cent of those he has faced in his career and the League Cup final was moments away from being decided on spot kicks.

It made perfect sense for Sarri to take out Kepa Arrizabalaga and introduce the Argentinian in his place. It was ingenious. Caballero is a former Manchester City goalkeeper. If anyone was about to be intimidated by his presence in a shoot-out, it would be a City player.

Indeed, Vincent Kompany, their captain, told of how relieved he was that the substitution was not made and recalled how Caballero had made three saves for City in the shoot-out in the League Cup final in 2016 against Liverpool.

It did not happen in the end. Ah, and there's the rub. All that pragmatism from Sarri, all that ingenuity, and he was undone at the death by his young 'keeper refusing to obey his instruction to leave the field.

It happens all the time, a player feels miffed he is being substituted... There were mitigating circumstances, but they hardly matter. What mattered was that Kepa's stubbornness caused his head coach to flounce towards the exit.

Of course, if you are the world's most expensive goalkeeper, then you really do not want to be taken off a few minutes before the end of extra time and the start of a penalty shoot-out.

This was the 24-year-old's first showpiece final in English football, his moment to shine and yet there was his head coach signalling for him to come off.

It happens all the time, a player feels miffed he is being substituted. They sometimes storm past their manager without looking him in the eye, they may kick a water bottle. They have been known, very rarely, to ignore the instruction altogether but not in a final, not so blatantly.

There were mitigating circumstances, but they hardly matter.

What mattered was that Kepa's stubbornness caused his head coach to flounce towards the exit. Sarri was clearly incensed to the point of forgetting where he was. His incredulity was palpable, his blood boiled. He was, in short, made to look stupid.

By the time he faced the media, the Italian had calmed down, he smiled, he tried to steer the conversation to how well his tactics had suffocated Pep Guardiola's team. He knew how it had looked, that cameo of insubordination, but he downplayed it.

Kepa had simply been trying to tell the bench that he was not hurt, that despite receiving treatment twice in the game, he was just fine to carry on.

The Italian explained he thought his goalkeeper was suffering cramp and therefore was in no fit state to face a succession of penalties.

But it was futile for the former Napoli manager to claim he had not been incensed. "I was really angry," he confirmed.

Where then, does this leave a coach who was on the verge of being sacked and probably would have been if Guardiola had engineered a second 6-0 thrashing a fortnight after the west London club's humiliation in the Premier League?

It leaves him in the twilight zone of what might have been. Just think how his position would have been strengthened had Caballero been, once again, the shoot-out hero?

Instead, we are left with the uncomfortable image of a player openly ignoring his coach, and, indeed, the player who tried to remonstrate with him. David Luiz told him to respect the wishes of the bench, but the Spaniard was having none of it.

It spoilt a good day out for Sarri. The team had concentrated well, been stoic and certainly deserved the chance to try their luck at penalties. It was almost a turning point for the suffering Sarri.

THE TIMES, LONDON

Published and printed by Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Co. Regn. No. 198402868E.

A member of Audit Bureau of Circulations Singapore. Customer Service (Circulation): 6388-3838, circs@sph.com.sg, Fax 6746-1925.

YOSHIDA IN LINE TO LEAD LIONS

Ex-Jurong FC midfielder and former J-League trainer heads race to be next national coach

David Lee

The long-awaited search for a permanent national football coach is likely to end next month and The Straits Times understands that the current front runner for the hot seat is former J-League coach Tatsuma Yoshida.

Sources say that the 44-year-old, who was recommended to the Football Association of Singapore (FAS) by the Japan Football Association, was interviewed by FAS via Skype last Thursday.

If he lands the job, Yoshida will be the first Japanese, as well as the first former S-League (now rebranded as Singapore Premier League) import, to become Singapore's national football coach.

Born in Chiba prefecture, Yoshida was a central midfielder and started his playing career with hometown club Kashiwa Reysol before turning out for Kyoto Sanga and Montedio Yamagata.

In 2002, he signed for Jurong FC and played under former Singapore coach V. Sundram Moorthy, then player-coach for the Cobras.

After hanging up his boots that year, Yoshida returned to Reysol, where he rose through the ranks – from youth-team coach to technical director and then the head coach. However, he lasted just one season each as head coach of Reysol (2015) and Albirex Niigata (2016). His last head coach assignment was at Ventforet Kofu from 2017 to last year.

Nevertheless, a source told ST: "Yoshida is a very highly rated coach who is conversant in English.

"He made his name as Reysol's academy director and helped to produce some good national players like right-back Hiroki Sakai, who is now at Marseille, and attacking midfielder Yuki Otsu, who played for Borussia Monchengladbach in Germany and VVV-Venlo in Holland.

Tatsuma Yoshida is believed to be meticulous in planning and also committed to youth development. PHOTO: J-LEAGUE

"His knack for youth development will be a plus for the FAS."

Sundram, who is now Laos' national coach, added: "When he came to Jurong, he was a hard-working defensive midfielder. But you know Japanese players are so comfortable with the ball, he was useful in attack too with his passes and understanding of the game.

"When I was national coach, the national team had a training camp in Japan and we played a friendly against Albirex in Niigata and he was the coach there.

"I could see that as a coach, he is very thorough and detailed. It was a one-off game, but his team were well organised and every player knew his role in a high-pressing game."

FAS president Lim Kia Tong had earlier shared that the new national coach could be announced last month, and said: "We need a national coach who has the tenacity to build up our youth so that eventually, we will replenish the national team. The team must now be able to play high-intensity, hard-pressing and a fast-moving game."

But it is understood that the appointment will be made before the next Fifa window next month, when the Lions will participate in a friendly quadrangular across the Causeway featuring hosts Malaysia, Oman and New Zealand, although it is unclear whether the new coach will be in charge by then.

The national coach position has been vacant since Fandi Ahmad's interim stint ended following Singapore's group-stage elimination at the AFF Suzuki Cup last November. Prior to that, Sundram was in charge from 2016 to last April.

Previous names linked to the job include former Iraq coach Jorvan Vieira and South Africa coach Stuart Baxter.

An FAS spokesman said: "The FAS have had discussions with several candidates in our search for the national team coach and are pleased to state that we are at the tail end of the process.

"We are working towards an announcement on this matter soon, in time for the 2022 Fifa World Cup qualifiers in June."

davidlee@sph.com.sg

Liverpool striker Roberto Firmino (right), challenging Manchester United's Chris Smalling for the ball, sustained an ankle injury in the 0-0 draw. PHOTO: REUTERS

Reds must rediscover passion: Klopp

LONDON • Jurgen Klopp has urged his Liverpool players "to learn to adapt" to positive pressure and defensive opposition after the manager was left bewildered by his team's performance against an injury-hit Manchester United.

Klopp described Sunday's goalless draw at Old Trafford as both a point gained and a missed opportunity as his Liverpool side returned to the top of the Premier League at the expense of Manchester City.

The German was at a loss to understand why the disruptions – United lost Nemanja Matic before kick-off and then Ander Herrera, Juan Mata and his replacement, Jesse Lingard, to hamstring injuries inside 43 minutes – affected the visitors more than the hosts.

He told reporters: "From my point of view, it is very positive pressure, but I don't have to play – I only sit here and say dumb things, so that's easy.

"For the boys, they all have to learn in these situations. The only way we can do it is with passion.

"The heart and soul of this club is passion and we have another chance (against Watford tomorrow), then there is the (Merseyside) derby (on Sunday), which is a very emotional game.

"This game was a fight, but a different fight to what we expected and we didn't adapt like we should have.

"Today was not brilliant, but we lose here more often than we drew. It feels like we should have won, but it was the same against Bayern (Munich) when they came and defended with all they have."

Liverpool endured their own injury issue when Roberto Firmino turned an ankle in the first half, which Klopp called "a catastrophe". The club have yet to issue a diagnosis on the injury.

He added: "It was a game without a lot of highlights, it was intense. All the injuries in the game obviously cost us rhythm and we couldn't get it back. On days when United are beatable, you have to do it and we didn't do it."

Having kept a clean sheet despite the injuries, United's caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer took an opposing view.

"He can have his own opinion," the Norwegian said of Klopp. "We had a good performance, defensively absolutely fantastic.

"He's not happy if they didn't have a shot on target, or one, and that was a long strike from (Daniel) Sturridge, but I was very pleased with the performance and the fans enjoyed it."

Solskjaer, however, took umbrage at how Marcus Rashford came in for rough treatment throughout the game.

Admitting the forward, who is expected to miss the trip to Crystal Palace tomorrow, would have been withdrawn early after "his ankle blew up" if not for injuries to Herrera and Mata, Solskjaer said: "I can't say he was targeted, but there were quite a few fouls on him definitely." THE GUARDIAN

Premier League talking points

1

REVERSAL PUTS HASENHUTTL IN A FIX

When Southampton ended Arsenal's 22-match unbeaten run on Dec 16 at St Mary's – in Ralph Hasenhuttl's second game in charge – it was a performance and occasion that teemed with intensity, a clear example of a new-manager bounce.

At the Emirates on Sunday, the most striking aspects of the club's 2-0 defeat were their flatness and fragility.

The Saints could have leaked four or five by half-time and the Austrian, who appeared to have the weight of the world on his shoulders afterwards, must find a way to unlock the tension, having taken only two points from their past four games.

2

DEULOFEU MAY BE COMING OF AGE

Gerard Deulofeu has promised much but failed to deliver since his arrival on English shores as a fresh-faced 18-year-old with Everton in 2013 – yet could he finally be coming of age after his dazzling hat-trick for Watford left Cardiff stunned?

Growing up in Lionel Messi's shadow cannot be easy, especially after the Barcelona academy product was given one final shot at the Nou Camp last season.

Could this be the game where Deulofeu, now 24, proved he is ready to become one of the Premier League's better performers or will it prove to be another false dawn?

3

LEJEUNE MAKING HIS PRESENCE FELT

Newcastle fans welcomed Miguel Almiron to Tyneside with a special banner and, in return, the £21 million (S$37 million) Paraguay playmaker brought flair to the party on his home debut against Huddersfield on Saturday.

But another player's influence should not be overlooked – Newcastle's shaky start to the season coincided with Florian Lejeune being sidelined with a ruptured cruciate ligament but, since his return, they have made much improvements.

The 27-year-old Frenchman is an excellent defender whose comfort on the ball, technical assurance and vision enable Rafael Benitez's 5-4-1 formation to switch seamlessly to an attacking 3-4-3. THE GUARDIAN

SportsWorld

Ridhwan gets Leon bout in Manila

Singapore boxer Muhamad Ridhwan will take on Filipino Cris Leon in the Rising Stars event in the Philippines on March 23.

The event in Manila is co-promoted by Ringstar and Manny Pacquiao's MP Promotions.

The bout was pencilled in after Ringstar had announced the postponement of Ridhwan's World Boxing Council silver featherweight title bout against Paulus Ambunda, originally slated for March 29 at the Singapore Indoor Stadium.

Bale sulks after saving Real

MADRID • Gareth Bale came off the bench to score a controversial winning penalty, sealing a 2-1 win against Levante on Sunday, but his refusal to celebrate hinted that all may not be well again at Real Madrid.

However, coach Santiago Solari claimed the Wales forward was free "to celebrate how he wants as long as we win".

The spot kick in the LaLiga game was awarded despite the Video Assistant Referee exposing Real midfielder Casemiro's dive. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Serena cartoon not racist

MELBOURNE • A cartoon published in The Herald Sun that depicted Serena Williams having a temper tantrum at last year's US Open was not racist, Australia's media watchdog said yesterday.

The caricature of the American – with exaggerated lips and tongue – was widely condemned.

But the Australian Press Council ruled that Mark Knight's cartoon did not breach its standards of practice. REUTERS

LOTTERY

TOTO

Mon, 25 Feb 2019 Draw No. 3452/2019

Group 1 Prize $1,167,738

Winning Numbers						Add. No.
09	12	27	28	38	44	10

Prize Group	Share Amount	No. of Winning Shares
Group 1	No Winner	0
Group 2	$245,840	1
Group 3	$1,657	102
Group 4	$310	298
Group 5	$50	6,106
Group 6	$25	9,191
Group 7	$10	108,991

Next Draw Thu, 28 Feb 2019, 6.30pm Draw No. 3453/2019

Group 1 Prize $2,400,000 est.

Draw Venue: Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, 210 Middle Road, #01-01, Singapore 188994

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS

Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Tue, 26 Feb 2019				
Asian FC Cup	Yangon United	Tampines	5.00pm	LW*
Wed, 27 Feb 2019				
English Premier	Huddersfield	Wolverhampton	3.45am	LW^
English Premier	Cardiff	Everton	3.45am	LW^
English Premier	Leicester	Brighton	3.45am	LW^
English Premier	Newcastle	Burnley	4.00am	LW^
Italian Cup	Lazio	Milan	4.00am	LW^

LW* : Telecast not available at Livewire(Singapore Pools)
LW^ : Telecast available at Livewire(Marina Bay Sands) only
Visit singaporepools.com for the latest 'Live' telecast listing.

No person under the age of 18 years shall be allowed to purchase a ticket or to claim any prize.
LW: Livewire (MBS) & Livewire (RWS) (21 years and above)
Livewire (Singapore Pools) (21 years and above during 'Live' telecast)
SB: SportsBuzz@Kranji (21 years and above)
Singapore Pools Account Service. Call 6786 6688 for more details.

PLAY RESPONSIBLY
Stay Legal, Bet With Care. | National Problem Gambling Helpline: 1800-6-668-668

RCB Reg No.: 196800202G

SPORT

JOHNSON REVELS IN 20-TITLE MILESTONE

American star holds off McIlroy in Mexico to become 5th man to reach rare mark before 35

Dustin Johnson's impeccable driving and putting were key to his five-stroke victory over Rory McIlroy at the WGC-Mexico Championship. PHOTO: REUTERS

MEXICO CITY • Nine holes into his record-tying round of 62 on Sunday, Justin Thomas bumped into Rory McIlroy, who was waiting to tee off on the first hole at the Club de Golf Chapultepec.

He said he asked McIlroy how he thought the afternoon would go.

The Northern Irishman began the final day of the WGC-Mexico Championship four strokes behind Dustin Johnson, a deficit that was daunting but not insurmountable.

The 29-year-old told Thomas, who eventually ended ninth on 275, that it would be hard to catch Johnson because of how well he was playing, a prediction that proved to be hit-the-flagstick accurate.

Former world No. 1 Johnson, who was sixth on the PGA Tour in driving distance last year, ranked first in putting at the WGC-Mexico.

It was an unbeatable combination as he closed with a five-under 66 to finish five strokes clear of McIlroy, who posted a 67.

The 34-year-old's total of 21-under 263 won him his 20th Tour title. McIlroy finished at 16 under, which would have been good enough to win in each of the previous two years that the tournament was held here.

On Sunday, all it got McIlroy was a five-stroke cushion over the third-placed finishers, while Tiger Woods hit a 69 to end in a four-way tie for 10th at eight under.

"It was sort of like there was two different golf tournaments going on and I won the second one," said McIlroy, who has posted top-five finishes in all four of his Tour starts this year.

Johnson, on the other hand, extended his streak of seasons with at least one Tour title to 12, an emphatic argument for his inclusion among the finest players in the men's game.

Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer share the record at 17, one better than Billy Casper and three more than Woods.

"To get 20 wins is very difficult, and to do it before I turn 35 is pretty incredible," Johnson, who is the first player since Davis Love III in 2008 to reach 20 Tour titles, said.

He added: "This is a big one for me, and it gives me a lot of confidence for the rest of the year."

It could not be going much better for Johnson, who became the fifth player to collect 20 wins before his 35th birthday, joining Woods, Phil Mickelson, Tom Watson and Johnny Miller. "It's very sweet," he said. "It's been a lot of hard work to get here, but it feels really good. I'm very proud of myself."

McIlroy also extended a streak, this one more enigmatic.

Since January of last year, he has played his way into the last group for the final round eight times – without emerging triumphant.

His lone title run in that stretch came at Bay Hill last March when he started the final round in the next-to-last group.

"I knew at that point (he made par on No. 10, which Johnson birdied) that I didn't have a chance, D.J. was playing too well," McIlroy said. "I felt like I was standing still. I was making birdies and going nowhere.

"I've played well, I've done what I've wanted to do and needed to do. My game's right there. I'm really happy with everything.

"I've just got to stay patient, look at the positives and just keep persisting and putting myself in positions. Sooner or later, hopefully it will go my way." NYTIMES

12

Years in a row Dustin Johnson has won at least one PGA Tour title.

SportingLife

Great triathlete unlocks the scary truth about suffering

Rohit Brijnath

Assistant Sports Editor

If you seriously want to know about sporting suffering; about how plain crazy sportspeople can be; about why athletes are scientists using themselves as lab rats to find out how much they can endure; about the pleasure found in pain and the ache for success; then this Yorkshire fellow is your man.

Jonny Brownlee has an Olympic triathlon silver (2016), an Olympic triathlon bronze (2012), is chasing an Olympic triathlon gold (2020), and needs to recite just one story about training on a Yorkshire dale to illustrate the truth of suffering.

"It was snowy, -10 (deg C) and I was out cycling on what I thought was a path but I realised was a frozen pond. It cracked and half my body fell through the ice. I had to ride an hour home. I was so cold when I got home I couldn't open the front door (with my hands)."

So?

"So I had to use my mouth to open the front door with the key."

He's not finished.

"The worst thing you can do is to warm up too quickly. I had to take my clothes off and get into bed for an hour and warm up slowly and then have a shower."

Brownlee is a sinewy study in self-denial, like some no-fat ascetic who's addicted to motion. He has a motto and it goes like this: "When you think you're tired, you can always go further, you can always go longer."

He's grinning.

Of course he's grinning for it is in such suffering that athletes find the depths of their commitment. But then Brownlee was born to suffer, born two years after his brother Alistair, the double Olympic triathlon champion, and thus always forced to catch up.

"When you're younger you're always slower but you always want to keep up. So I became very good at suffering by wanting to keep up.

"I honestly believe Alistair is the toughest athlete out there. He can go through more pain than anyone. So when I see that day in and day out I have learnt from that, I have learnt just how deep you can go."

Going deep is an inadvertent exploration of the self, it is athletes nudging at their limits, day after day, till pushing becomes normal, till pain is a pal, till the outrageous becomes commonplace.

In Antarctica once, the polar explorer Ranulph Fiennes started his expedition by man-hauling a load of 220kg across the ice. "After a hundred yards," he wrote, "I stopped, out of breath... The thought of pulling my sledge for an entire mile, never mind to the South Pole and beyond, was appalling."

Jonny Brownlee, 28, winning the Super League Triathlon Eliminator race last Saturday. He was second in Sunday's Enduro race and ended third in the overall series standings. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

And yet he kept going and Brownlee keeps labouring and it's something internal but also practised. At home, Brownlee – as he told a colleague – turned his conservatory into a heat chamber using four heaters and then runs and cycles inside.

How fast do you run on the treadmill?

"Very slow," he says.

Very slow?

"About 14-15 kmh."

Brownlee is a sinewy study in self-denial, like some no-fat ascetic who's addicted to motion. He has a motto and it goes like this: "When you think you're tired, you can always go further, you can always go longer." He's also an athletic conman who does what great sufferers do: they fool their own bodies during a race.

"When you're really suffering behind someone and you're struggling to keep up, I tell my body, 'right, I'm going to stay with them till the next corner and then I am going to ease up'." And then, after that, he tells his body, well, OK, one more corner and he'll ease up, and then another corner, and another. "I think," he says, "athletes are actually the best people at lying to the body."

Triathletes swim, bike, run, a sort of athletic triangle of tenacity, and while they grimace we can never accurately gauge how they feel.

And that's why we interview great athletes, in the hope they will take us beneath their competitive skin and let us sample their world.

Brownlee is a generous guide, taking you down the lanes of hardship and alleys of discomfort. "There are two types of suffering I always think," he says. "There's the suffering when it's not going very well... everything hurts, you think about every aching pain in your body. There's a suffering that when it's going well, you're suffering but it doesn't feel like you're suffering."

He talks fluently about the triathlon, about the demanding first 100m of the water, about going hard on the cycle and settling down, about what it's like towards the end of the race in hot conditions.

"Your head feels like it's about to explode. You can't wait to stop, you can't wait for that finish line. Your legs are hurting, your arms are hurting, you're out of breath. You cross the finish line and collapse."

He pauses.

"I always think if that finish line was a metre further I wouldn't have made it."

But you know he would have. You know if a man uses his mouth to turn a key to open a door then he probably has another step in him. Because he's spent too many mornings pushing through the invisible gateways of adversity.

rohitb@sph.com.sg

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL Macau Black Bears v Zhuhai Wolf Warriors (StarHub Ch202, 7.30pm).

FOOTBALL

AFC Cup Group F: Yangon v Tampines (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 4.50pm), Hanoi v NagaWorld (Ch116 & Ch210, 7.50pm). Gp G: Ceres Negros v Shan United (Ch115 & Ch209, 7.20am) . **English Premier League** Newcastle v Burnley (Ch102 & Ch227, tomorrow, 4am). Leicester v Brighton (Ch103 & Ch228), Huddersfield v Wolves (Ch104 & Ch229), Cardiff v Everton (Ch105 & Ch230) – tomorrow, 3.35am.

TENNIS

ATP Dubai Championships Day 2 (StarHub Ch201, 6pm & 11pm).
ATP Mexican Open Day 2 (Ch201, tomorrow, 6am).

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL

ABL CLS Knights Indonesia v S'pore Slingers (StarHub Ch202, 7pm).

FOOTBALL

AFC Cup Group H: Home v Makassar (Jalan Besar, 7.30pm. Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208), Lao v Kaya (Ch115 & Ch209) – 7.20pm.
English Premier League Chelsea v Tottenham (Ch103 & Ch228), Liverpool v Watford (Ch104 & Ch229), Man City v West Ham (Ch105 & Ch230), Palace v Man United (Ch106 & Ch231) – Thursday, 3.50am, Arsenal v Bournemouth (Ch107 & Ch232), Southampton v Fulham (Ch108 & Ch233) – Thursday, 3.35am.

TENNIS

ATP Dubai Championships Day 3 (StarHub Ch201, 6pm & 11pm).
ATP Mexican Open Day 3 (Ch201, Thursday, 6am).

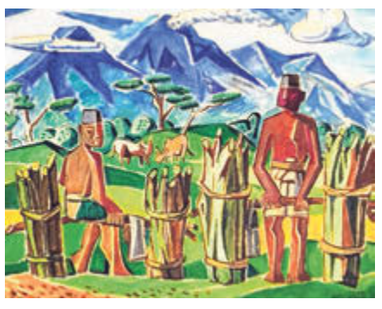
For latest updates, go to singteltv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

life

D

IS THIS REAL OR FAKE?
Art forgeries of old masters abound
D3

'END OF AN ERA'
Basheer Graphic Books founder dies
D10



91ST ACADEMY AWARDS

(From left) Best Actor Rami Malek, Best Actress Olivia Colman, Best Supporting Actress Regina King and Best Supporting Actor Mahershala Ali at the awards. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, DPA, NYTIMES, REUTERS

Night of upsets

Olivia Colman bags Best Actress, Green Book wins Best Picture and Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse takes Best Animated Feature

All the predictions were dire for an Oscars night that was going without a host for the first time since 1989.

It would try too hard to please and as a result become cringey, as happened in 1989, according to some reports. Others felt that sexual misconduct allegations swirling around director Bryan Singer would sink popular favourite Bohemian Rhapsody. For fans in Singapore, it would be a show they could not watch live because no distributor here carried it.

The first revelation: Hollywood's big night went smoothly, with no gaffes or cringe-worthy moments.

Still, there were surprises. The biggest had to be the Best Actress In A Leading Role win by Olivia Colman for her part as Queen Anne in The Favourite.

All the smart money was on Glenn Close, who appears in the drama The Wife. Acting awards favour veterans who have racked up multiple nominations. Close looked like a sure thing, with seven nominations and no wins to her name. She also came bedecked with wins, including Best Actress at both the Golden Globes and the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

But it was a shocked Colman who stepped on the stage and said it was "hilarious" that she had won, promising a "massive snog" to anyone she had forgotten to thank.

As if recognising that her win was an upset, the tearful 45-year-old British actress spoke aloud to Close, saying that the American was her idol.

"This is not how I wanted it to be," she said to laughter.

Close, 71, started her climb in the 1980s, with a Best Supporting Actress nod for the comedy-drama The World According To Garp (1982). In The Wife, she plays a woman whose talent has been obscured by her limelight-stealing author husband.

Close may have lost to relative newcomer Colman for a variety of reasons, including last-minute campaigning by maker Fox Searchlight Pictures. Colman is also respected by the acting community in Los Angeles for her long career in Britain, which includes television work in crime thriller Broadchurch (2013 to 2017) and the comedy Fleabag (2016).

The Favourite, with its 10 nominations, was tied with the drama Roma for the highest number for a film this year. But Colman's unexpected win was to be the end of the Oscar celebrations for the period comedy.

Roma went home with three wins, but in another surprise, it was beaten in the tally race by one of the most commercially successful films of the night, the musical biopic Bohemian Rhapsody, which got four wins out of its five nods.

American actor Rami Malek, who played Queen singer Freddie Mercury in the film, got his Lead Actor Oscar as predicted.

The production, which fired director Singer after he became mired in sexual misconduct allegations, also picked up Oscars for Film Editing, Sound Mixing and Sound Editing, proving that despite the momentum of the #MeToo and #TimesUp campaigns, Hollywood voters like what they like.

Malek, tacitly acknowledging the furore, pointedly left out Singer's name when he gave his acceptance speech.

The musical's win also shut out the sound team behind the Neil Armstrong biopic First Man, directed by Damien Chazelle.

Singaporean Ai-Ling Lee, who is part of the teams nominated for Sound Mixing and Sound Editing, will have to wait longer for a win to complement her four Oscar nods.

Roma's three wins – for Best Foreign Language Film, Best Director (for Alfonso Cuaron) and Best Cinematography (also for Cuaron) – is a feather in the cap for streaming service Netflix, which has been on the hunt for awards to show its maturity as a platform for movies.

It was edged out by biographical comedy drama Green Book for the biggest prize of the night though, Best Picture. This is only the fifth instance since the Academy Awards started in 1929 that the director of the Best Picture – in this case Peter Farrelly – has not been nominated for Best Director.

In the Best Animated Feature category, the favourite was Incredibles 2, the long-awaited sequel to the superhero comedy The Incredibles (2004). In another upset, it became the first Pixar movie since Cars (2006) to be nominated in that category but not win when it lost to another superhero movie, Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse.

But there was some consolation for the animation giant. Its short film Bao picked up Best Animated Short.

Directed by Chinese-Canadian Domee Shi, the story of a Chinese mother who cannot let go of her son is being hailed as a work that represents Asian talent in the West.

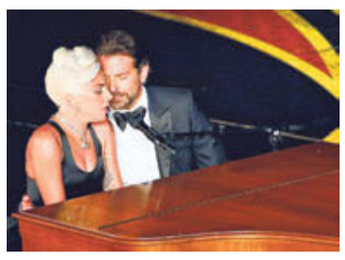
John Lui
Film Correspondent

johnlui@sph.com.sg

Alfonso Cuaron with the Oscars for Best Foreign Language Film, Best Director and Best Cinematography for Roma.

Bao producer Becky Neiman-Cobb (left) and director Domee Shi with their awards for Best Animated Short.

Brian May (left) of Queen and Adam Lambert performing during the awards.



Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper performing Shallow from A Star Is Born.

Winners

Best Picture
Green Book

Best Director
Alfonso Cuaron (Roma)

Best Actor In A Leading Role
Rami Malek (Bohemian Rhapsody)

Best Actress In A Leading Role
Olivia Colman (The Favourite)

Best Actor In A Supporting Role
Mahershala Ali (Green Book)

Best Actress In A Supporting Role
Regina King (If Beale Street Could Talk)

Best Foreign Language Film
Roma

Best Animated Feature Film
Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse

Best Original Screenplay
Green Book

Best Adapted Screenplay
BlacKkKlansman

Best Original Score
Black Panther

Best Original Song
Shallow (A Star Is Born)

MORE STORIES on D2&3

91ST ACADEMY AWARDS

Plucky and pink

Men made waves in stunning silhouettes and women paraded out in a sea of pink at the Oscars

Gordon Ng

The last lap of awards season has come with the 91st Academy Awards, the most prestigious of the accolades – and red carpets.

And at this year's Oscars, which took place in Hollywood yesterday morning (Singapore time), those who embraced colour or an unusual silhouette stood out, proving that taking a gamble can be a winning move.

The early appearance of stage actor Billy Porter on the red carpet set the bar high with a custom velvet creation by designer Christian Siriano. The top was a closely cut tuxedo jacket complete with a bow tie and cummerbund, and the bottom was the billowing crinolined skirt of a ball gown. Tony Award-winning Porter, who has recently risen to mainstream fame, is the representation of queer culture pushing the boundaries for everyone else to follow.

And follow they did, as in the case of Chadwick Boseman. The actor, known for playing the titular superhero in Black Panther, has been successfully making unconventional fashion choices. His Givenchy haute couture suit – a new men's category from the French house – was richly embroidered, complete with wide trousers and a long silk scarf for subtle flair. It cut an elegant silhouette that bucked tradition.

Other standouts from the men included Stephan James (Homecoming, 2018 to present) in a scarlet velvet tuxedo. Though classic, the vibrant colour gave the actor visibility befitting a rising star. Nicholas Hoult (The Favourite) was dressed in a mohair Dior Man suit featuring a silk sash from designer Kim Jones' latest collection last month. Again, a smart twist on a classic.

Less inspiring was Rami Malek, who opted for a no-frills slim tux by Anthony Vaccarello at Saint Laurent. He did land the perfect shiny accessory for it though – a Best Actor statuette as iconic musician Freddie Mercury in the biopic Bohemian Rhapsody.

Joyous pink made numerous appearances among the women. It was on Gemma Chan (Crazy Rich Asians) as a smocked Valentino gown complete with pockets. Her signature fashion trick recently has been understated glamour paired with the insouciant gesture of her hands in her pockets. It is refreshing, young and a paragon of modern red-carpet dressing.

Also in pink was Helen Mirren, who wore a custom dress by surrealist house Schiaparelli. The feather-light tulle creation had layered dimensions of orange and pink, and though simple in silhouette and free of embellishments, was accessorised with more than US$6 million (S$8.1 million) worth of jewellery.

But for it to be a trend, one must count the numbers. There was tidying maestro Marie Kondo in Jenny Packham, recent Grammy Award winner Kacey Musgraves in Giambattista Valli, maverick rapper and actress Awkwafina in DSquared2, and American Horror Story star Sarah Paulson in Brandon Maxwell.

Maybe it was a reclamation of the colour and its associated femininity. From frothy tulle to body-hugging sex appeal, there were shades and styles to tickle one pink.

On the flip side, some women ushered in a more masculine look. Comediennes Amy Poehler and Melissa McCarthy wore beautiful trousered outfits. Poehler was in an Alberta Ferretti tuxedo cut in Le Smoking style and McCarthy an old Hollywood cape-and-palazzo pant look by Brandon Maxwell. It was a breath of fresh air on the red carpet and evidence, if any was needed, that pants fit comfortably into the vocabulary of glamour.

And then there were the gowns, which have always been the bread and butter of red-carpet dressing.

This year, the arching style seemed to be pared-back classicism. There is something in the air about modest extravagance and it was showcased best in the outfits of Lady Gaga (A Star Is Born) and Glenn Close (The Wife). They were nominated for Best Actress, a category in which they have been competing against each other for the whole of this awards season.

Gaga turned up in a fairly modest black Alexander McQueen gown. It had a bit of a train and boxy padded hips, and was worn with black leather gloves and a marvel of a necklace – one which featured the Tiffany diamond, one of the world's largest yellow diamonds at 128.5 carats.

Close, on the other hand, came as an Oscar statuette. The golden number from Carolina Herrera was made of about four million beads and reportedly weighed about 19kg. The clean lines and simple silhouette balanced out the sheer material pizzazz of the dress.

Olivia Colman, who won Best Actress for her role as Queen Anne in The Favourite, had on a custom Prada gown – turtleneck A-line in green emerald silk, with an embroidered organza cape knotted at the back into a bow. Elegant and unfussy, it was a dress perfectly matched to its wearer.

stlife@sph.com.sg

• Gordon Ng is a freelance fashion writer.

Best dressed

BILLY PORTER IN CHRISTIAN SIRIANO: The 49-year-old star of the television series Pose came to impress. In a tuxedo gown custom-made by designer and Project Runway winner Siriano, Porter showed that men have the ability to work a gown as well as any woman.

PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, EPA-EFE, REUTERS

MICHELLE YEOH IN ELIE SAAB: That insanely beautiful diamond bracelet would have landed Yeoh on the best-dressed list. But the rest of her look was on point as well. The 56-year-old Malaysian actress may not have been nominated for her ice-cold portrayal of Singaporean taitai Eleanor Young in Crazy Rich Asians, but she still looked every bit a superstar.

LADY GAGA IN ALEXANDER MCQUEEN: With this elegant black Alexander McQueen paired with opera gloves, Gaga, 32, who picked up Best Original Song for A Star Is Born, evokes Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast At Tiffany's (1961). She even paired the dress with the iconic Tiffany diamond – at a whopping 128.5 carats – last worn by guess who? Hepburn, of course.

DANAI GURIRA IN BROCK COLLECTION: The Black Panther cast consistently showed up in excellent red-carpet looks, but Gurira knocked it out of the park with this gold strapless gown. With the matching dangly gold earrings and long braids, there was no doubt the 41-year-old was a radiant queen.

ELSIE FISHER IN THOM BROWNE: The breakout star of Eighth Grade may not have been nominated for her work as an anxious teen finishing her last week of middle school, but she sure won the red carpet in her own way. Eschewing princess gowns, the 15-year-old opted for a sleek suit-and-vest combination, shiny boots and a too-cool-for-school expression. The result? You desperately want her approval.

SPIKE LEE IN OZWALD BOATENG: Lady Gaga was not the only one paying tribute to legends on the Oscars red carpet. Director Lee, 61, who took home Best Adapted Screenplay for BlacKkKlansman, wore a purple number inspired by his friend Prince, who died in 2016. The musician famously loved the colour and his hit song Purple Rain featured him in an extravagant purple suit.

ANGELA BASSETT IN REEM ACRA: Pink was a popular choice on the red carpet, with many actresses such as Sarah Paulson, Helen Mirren and Gemma Chan sporting it. But no one did it better than Bassett, 60, who turned up in a bold, pink, one-shoulder Reem Acra number.

Worst dressed

LINDA CARDELLINI IN SCHIAPARELLI: Green Book's Cardellini, 43, much like Bassett, showed up in pink. While Bassett looked like an A-lister, Cardellini's dress looks more like two hot-pink flamingos collided on her body. Then somebody tied a sash around her waist and sent her to the Oscars. Enough said.

RAMI MALEK IN SAINT LAURENT: Oh Malek, why? The Bohemian Rhapsody star won Best Actor, but was anything but winsome on the red carpet. Malek, 37, won his Oscar for playing Freddie Mercury – the lead singer of Queen and one of the most irreverent and bold artists. The straight and narrow, black-and-white number is simply boring. And you know who famously hated being boring? Mercury.

MAYA RUDOLPH IN GIAMBATTISTA VALLI: Comedienne and former Saturday Night Live cast member Rudolph, 46, did not seem to get the memo that you cannot attend the Oscars draped in bedsheets from your grandmother's retirement home. Not even if you fashion it into a cape. Rudolph, go home. You are clearly drunk.

Jan Lee

Buy an Ong Kim Seng semi-nude? It's a fake

A pastel work attributed to the Singaporean artist was almost auctioned over the weekend, highlighting the issue of fakes and forgeries of Asian masters

Toh Wen Li

A pastel on paper drawing of a semi-nude Balinese woman, signed and attributed to acclaimed Singapore artist Ong Kim Seng, was listed in a recent auction catalogue.

The portrait could well have gone under the hammer at a Masterpiece auction in Kuala Lumpur last weekend, but was withdrawn after he raised an objection.

Ong, 73, a watercolourist known for his landscapes and cityscapes, says he has never done a single pastel drawing in his life.

Noting that the artwork was dated 1962, he adds: "I was only 17 years old then. How could a 17-year-old have such maturity? I didn't even own a pastel set."

He adds: "To achieve that kind of maturity, I should be starting around 12 years old. Can a 12-year-old do a semi-nude? My mum would beat me, I tell you."

Such incidents – some less risible than others – are not uncommon in the art world where fake works abound and have slipped into online marketplaces as well as galleries and auction houses.

Even esteemed auction companies such as Christie's have been sued for selling forged works. And last year, an art gallery in France discovered that more than half of its paintings were forgeries.

Mr Daniel Komala, chief executive of Larasati Auctioneers, says artworks by old masters are a popular target for forgers and fakes of such works outnumber the real versions in the market.

He adds: "Whenever demand for works by an old master is on the rise and the market finds itself in short supply, forgery will fill up the gap."

At his auction house, all artworks by dead artists are examined by experts. Sometimes, they contact the artist's family to trace the history of the piece, but this is not foolproof.

Not all families are able to judge if the works are authentic and many of them cannot, says Mr Komala.

"What is worse, there are cases where families have turned out to be the source of forgery itself."

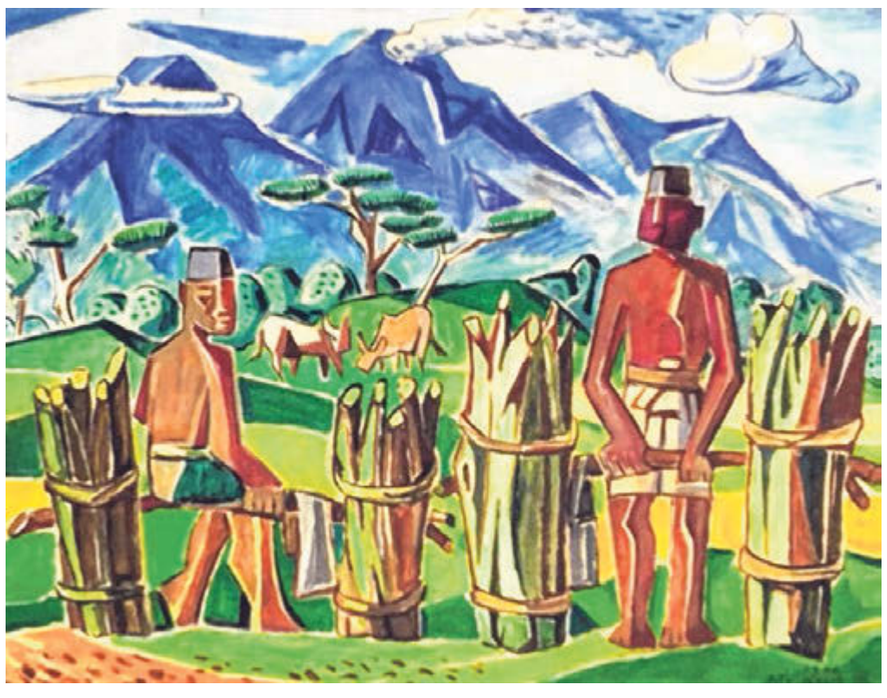
In the murky world of fakes and forgeries, it is often hard to prove if a piece of work is authentic.

Art dealer Ho Sou Ping, founder of Artcommune Gallery, which represents Ong, spotted the offending pastel work after a collector asked him if it was authentic. But he admits that without consulting Ong, it would have been hard to tell.

"It could have been an early work. Artists usually find their distinct style a bit later on in their career... In the 1960s and 1970s, things were not documented properly."

And in 2015, National Gallery Singapore stopped displaying a painting by Chen Wen Hsi after a private collector, who had a similar work, produced evidence that suggested his was authentic.

A panel of experts studied the questionable artwork, titled Net Drying, but their investigation was inconclusive.



Last month, Song Art Foundation founder Allison Liu had a dealer trying to sell her Liu Kang's Gathering Firewood (1956). She compared an image of the original (above and right above) found in a catalogue of the artist's work and an image of the forged work (left and right) and noticed differences in the colours and composition, among other things. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SONG ART FOUNDATION

The gallery said then: "It is not uncommon for artists to paint more than one painting of the same style, subject matter and composition."

There is always a risk of buying a fake artwork, says 33 Auction's director David Fu. He estimates that the auction house rejects about 90 per cent of submissions attributed to the late Indonesian painter Hendra Gunawan for being fakes.

Artists such as Gunawan, Singapore pioneer painter Chen Wen Hsi and, "increasingly, some Liu Kang works coming from Malaysia", have been particularly prone to forgery.

Mr Fu adds: "A year ago, we saw a huge number of (pioneer Singapore artist) Chen Chong Swee works appearing on the market. We were extremely careful with those. We checked with the family and our suspicions were confirmed."

"There are certain periods where fake works flood the market and collectors' confidence in that artist suddenly falls and prices take a turn for the worse," says Mr Fu, citing forgeries of works by Indonesian artist Popo Iskandar as an example.

For collectors, having some experience and common sense can help.

Last month, a dealer tried to sell Ms Allison Liu – the founder of Song Art Foundation – a painting which he claimed was by Liu Kang. The proportions of the 70 by 90cm artwork, titled Gathering Firewood (1956), were reproduced down to a tee, but she smelled a rat.

"He told me the work could be presented to me only after I had paid him... He asked for about $40,000, but a size like that would fetch double the price."

Comparing the image with the version found in catalogues of Liu's work, she spotted some discrepancies – differences in colour and the lack of liu bai, blank spaces on the canvas that give the painting room to "breathe".

The nail in the coffin: She had once seen the same painting in Liu's old house and later saw it was still there.

Chen Wen Hsi is another artist whose works are often forged – Ms Liu estimates that "more than half" of those on the market are fakes.

She adds: "He is getting more popular with mainland Chinese collectors. So we are now seeing forged Chen Wen Hsis not only in Singapore and Malaysia... some of the works could be forged in China by skilful painters."

People who have bought fakes are advised to return them to the dealers or auction houses they bought the works from. They might be able to get a refund.

But there are also collectors who simply try to sell their fake artworks to someone else, says Ms Liu.

To reduce their chances of being conned, collectors should do their research to familiarise themselves with an artist's work by, for example, referring to catalogues and going for exhibitions. They can also approach specialists, authorised dealers and artist's studios.

The Intellectual Property Office of Singapore (Ipos) encourages victims to seek legal advice – for instance, by consulting a member of Ipos' network of lawyers for a one-time free session.

It will run a free workshop in April that will, among other things, address the issue of forged artworks.

Mr Komala says: "For new buyers with minimal knowledge of art, it would be best to buy works by living artists and buy them from credible auction houses, galleries or dealers with proven track records."

He adds: "Nine out of 10 collectors and dealers, if not all, have experienced buying fakes.

"It's the 'school fee' to graduate as a collector or dealer."

tohwenli@sph.com.sg

Nobody hosted the Oscars... and they did a fine job

Keegan-Michael Key "floated" in with an umbrella to introduce Bette Midler performing a song from Mary Poppins Returns. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEW YORK • And the Oscar for best Academy Awards host goes to... nobody.

The original plan, of course, was for comedian Kevin Hart to preside over Sunday night's awards, until he was dropped for his history of homophobic tweets.

So instead of a comedian delivering a monologue, there was a mini-medley from Queen – whose original singer, Freddie Mercury, was celebrated in Bohemian Rhapsody – fronted by Adam Lambert.

So began this hostless, in-a-hurry Oscars, itself a long-time institution moving forward and putting on a show without the public face it started with.

And as it turns out, Hart – or whoever might have replaced him – was hardly missed. That the Oscars managed a watchable show, much less the brisk, entertaining one the audience got, was a surprise.

The Academy spent months stumbling down a red carpet lined with rakes, deftly stepping on each one. It had announced a new category for best popular picture, then retracted it. It shunted four awards to the commercial breaks, then unshunted them.

The awards show was so in flux until the last minute that, when Tina Fey, Amy Poehler and Maya Rudolph took the stage, it seemed that the Oscars might have pulled off a cloak-and-dagger feat, hiring a troika of surprise hosts. "We are not your hosts," Fey joked, "but we're going to stand here a little too long so the people who get USA Today tomorrow will think that we hosted."

No one got to stand anywhere too long at this Oscars, whose production kept the show to its allotted three hours for a change.

This Oscars marched at double-time, hustling from one segment to the next. It was like eating off a conveyor belt. Some delicious moments went past quick, but if the next bite was not to your taste, another bite would be coming soon.

A good Oscars host – Chris Rock, for example – can puncture the bubble of rich-people self-congratulation. But the need for a host to "run" the show may be overrated. Most years, the hosts vanish for long stretches after the monologue.

Instead, the broadcast kept momentum with a string of mini-hosts: Keegan-Michael Key, floating from the heavens with an umbrella to introduce Bette Midler performing a song from Mary Poppins Returns; South African-born Daily Show host Trevor Noah, referencing Black Panther by reminiscing about "growing up as a young boy in Wakanda".

A duet between Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper on Shallow from A Star Is Born had no introduction at all, just the duo walking to the stage from their seats and the camera circling in for a close look.

Maybe the secret to an awards show is not joke writing or pizza-and-selfies stunts but faith: trusting in the moments that come from serendipity and emotion, which is to say, usually, from awards. The only way to get those moments is to get out of the way and hope.

On Sunday night, they came from winners of less-publicised awards, as when Hannah Beachler, the production design winner for Black Panther, read her speech, trembling, from her phone, and when Rayka Zehtabchi, director of the documentary short Period. End Of Sentence, exclaimed: "I'm not crying because I'm on my period... I can't believe a film about menstruation just won an Oscar."

They came from non-artists, such as Congressman John Lewis, emotionally recalling the beatings of civil rights activists like himself while introducing Green Book.

They came from bigger names, such as Olivia Colman, who gave the raspberry to the "Please wrap up" direction, and Spike Lee, who upon winning his first competitive Oscar for the BlacKkKlansman adapted screenplay, leapt into the arms of Samuel L. Jackson and cited the history of slavery in his acceptance speech.

Beyond the host drama and shell game with the awards categories, this year's Oscars were wrestling with a root problem: What and who are the Academy Awards for? Are they for film buffs or casual watchers? Should they try to offer something for everyone? Is that even possible in this nichified era?

This ceremony may not have solved every awards-show problem and the ratings may or may not improve. But it managed, by sticking to the basics, to reasonably serve all its constituencies. Except, maybe, the shrinking group of comedians who are both famous enough to host the Oscars and still willing to do it. NYTIMES

Art in covered walkways

Those are among the locations of the six art experiences in the event Passport, this year's edition of OH! Open House

Ong Sor Fern
Senior Culture Correspondent

Covered walkways are something Singaporeans take for granted. But Malaysian Khaw Han Chung is fascinated by them.

The 29-year-old executive assistant at Drama Box says: "I've grown so used to the walkways that I find it a hassle to move around my hometown when I visit. I think the convenience and comfort that covered walkways provide are often overlooked, yet it is an important part of our daily lives."

So a covered walkway will be the venue for his collaboration with Singaporean artist Jimmy Ong, for the latest edition of the OH! Open House series of art walks. Instead of the tried-and-tested formula of taking visitors on an art hop around a neighbourhood, Passport will offer six art experiences spread around different locations in Singapore.

Co-founder and artistic director of OH! Alan Oei, 42, says: "The concept of a walk felt a bit circumscribed." He adds that one of the things participants enjoyed most in previous tours was the personal encounters with home owners. But those encounters were a happy accident because not all home owners were present for the tours.

So this year, Oei decided to make the home owners an integral part of the works being presented. Curator Kirti Bhaskar Upadhyaya, 23, explains that artists were "matchmade" with hosts: "We had dates for them to have a conversation. Then if they were keen to work together, they were paired off."

She adds that all six artists had to spend time with the hosts in their homes to learn their routines and rhythms, and all the performances draw inspiration from the lives of the hosts.

Ong, who stayed with Khaw for three days in Khaw's rented room as part of the project, notes: The confined space and the distance from town made me see the reality of being a new immigrant, which for me, would have been the same reality of moving back to Singapore under reduced circumstance and not having a home."

The 55-year-old artist was based in the United States for more than 15 years, but now divides his time between Singapore and Yogyakarta in Indonesia.

He says: "I am attracted to the idea of being homeless in Singapore, of being an outsider and not having a say in your nationality, especially now that Singapore has so many immigrants working and living among us."

Khaw hopes the audience will come to appreciate their homes more after Passport: "I want to show people what it means to be placeless, to show them how fortunate they are to own a space in a country."

Ong adds: "Perhaps to see what we have taken for granted as a birthright, to weigh one's autonomy about where you want to live in the world."

BOOK IT / PASSPORT

WHERE: Six locations to be revealed on ticket purchase
WHEN: March 16 to 31, various times
ADMISSION: $20 from www.hapz.com/ohpassport
INFO: Go to ohopenhouse.org/PASSPORT

sorfern@sph.com.sg

Technology takes centre stage at Singapore arts festival

Akshita Nanda
Arts Correspondent

Technology takes the stage at the Singapore International Festival of Arts (Sifa) this year.

Theatre that is part virtual reality (VR) and part live performance, free dance-offs against your recorded self, and Oscar-winning composer Ryuichi Sakamoto improvising a musical duet to moving images were among the headline acts announced yesterday at The Arts House.

The annual event returns from May 16 to June 2 and is helmed by festival director Gaurav Kripalani, whose three-year term began last year. Sifa is presented by not-for-profit organisation Arts House Limited and commissioned by the National Arts Council.

Last year's festival had an attendance of more than 55,000 and sold 84 per cent of its tickets. Organisers say ticketholders spent an estimated four days at the festival and 65 per cent of viewers were first-time patrons of the festival.

The numbers are encouraging, says Ms Sarah Martin, chief executive officer of Arts House Limited, given that last year was the start of a new cycle under a new festival director, and the festival was held at a different time from the established August to September main season. "With all these new parameters, we have new audiences."

New performance genres feature in this year's Sifa, which includes VR-plus-theatre show Frogman by British company curious directive from May 21 to 26 at the School of the Arts (Sota) Studio Theatre, and free public dance-off We Can Dance by Canadian troupe Daily tous les jours with Canadian-Singaporean dancers ScRach MarcS.

In this large-scale interactive installation at the ground-floor plaza of the National Library Building, members of the public record dance moves and then have dynamic versions of themselves projected onto the walls for others to imitate or respond to. We Can Dance starts on May 10 and runs until the end of the festival.

On May 24 and 25, the Esplanade Theatre will be flooded with water and moving images for ST/LL, an interdisciplinary performance installation by Japanese art collective Dumb Type, set to music by Japanese composer Sakamoto.

On May 28, Sakamoto, who is known for the Oscar-winning soundtrack of The Last Emperor (1987), will perform an improvisatory work, Fragments, on this same set, to visuals by Dumb Type's founder Shiro Takatani.

Other headline acts include a concert by storied American jazz guitarist Bill Frisell and his Bill Frisell Trio on May 29 at the Victoria Theatre, and German choreographer Sasha Waltz's signature work, Korper, presented on May 31 and June 1 at the Esplanade Theatre.

Festival director Kripalani says of this year's programme: "For me, it was very much about identifying individual artists, both locally and internationally, who were game-changers and had a unique voice."

As announced in December, the festival features new commissions from local artists, including Toy Factory Productions' reworked Kun opera, A Dream Under The Southern Bough: Reverie (May 31 to June 2 at the Drama Centre Theatre) and Checkpoint Theatre's drama around aid workers, Displaced Persons' Welcome Dinner (May 24 to 26 at the Victoria Theatre).

A third commission by Singaporean artist Ho Tzu Nyen, The Mysterious Lai Teck (May 17 to 19 at the Sota Drama Theatre), explores the life of a historical figure. Lai Teck led the Malayan Communist Party during World War II, but also betrayed the party multiple times during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore. The work blends projections, shadow play, music and the use of an animatronic puppet.

This is Ho's third work for Singapore's flagship arts festival, which he says set the stage for his transdisciplinary approach today.

In 2007, when it was still the Singapore Arts Festival, he and film-maker Fran Borgia created The King Lear Project, which had a curtain call and post-show talk, but no performance of the Shakespeare play. In 2009, he collaborated with local music group The Observatory in presenting his film Earth with a live performance.

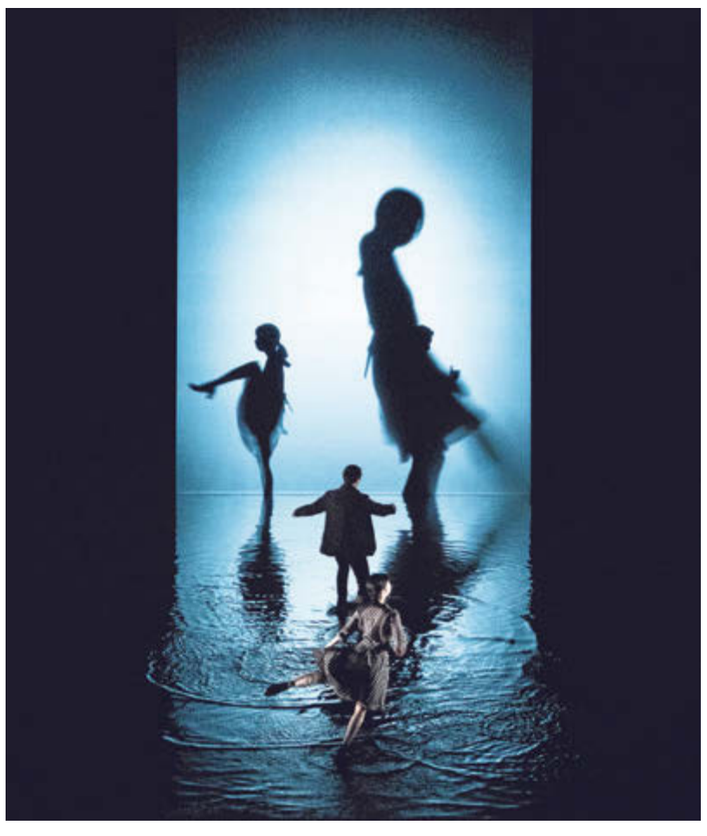
"This transdisciplinary approach, working with moving image, sound and the mechanics of theatre, continues to define my practice today," he says.

As was the case in last year's Sifa, The Arts House this year becomes the Festival House, hosting talks and discussions associated with the performances, as well as F&B options.

Also, following last year's initiative, Sifa will offer $10 student tickets to all shows for those with a valid student pass.

Kripalani says he hopes Sifa will be a transformative experience for young audiences, just as the arts festival shaped his tastes when he was growing up. "It's my goal to have every Singaporean, when they say, 'What should we do tonight?' they mean what show should we see tonight."

Ms Martin adds: "The dream is to make the arts a lifestyle choice."



This year's Singapore International Festival of Arts features Toy Factory Productions' reworked Kun opera, A Dream Under The Southern Bough: Reverie (left), and ST/LL (below), an interdisciplinary performance installation by Japanese art collective Dumb Type, set to music by composer Ryuichi Sakamoto.
PHOTOS: ARTS HOUSE LIMITED, YOSHIKAZU INOUE

akshitan@sph.com.sg

• The Singapore International Festival of Arts 2019 runs from May 16 to June 2. Tickets are available from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg).
For more information, go to sifa.sg

Anak Melayu stars (from far left) Amirah Yahya, Tysha Khan and Mastura Oli.
PHOTO: JOE NORZLAN

Restaging Anak Melayu for a new generation

Akshita Nanda
Arts Correspondent

When Teater Kami first staged Anak Melayu (Malay Child) in 1992, the play written by Noor Effendy Ibrahim was panned for depicting sexually suggestive acts and using graphic language on stage.

A restaging this week for the theatre group's 30th anniversary still hits hard because the issues leading to youth delinquency remain the same, according to director Adib Kosnan.

Anak Melayu runs from tomorrow to Saturday at the Malay Heritage Centre. It portrays the friendship between six Malay teenagers grappling with issues from school to sex and drugs, and trying to reconcile traditional values with contemporary mores. It will be set in today's world of smartphones and social media.

The first staging in 1992 was investigated by the Criminal Investigation Department for the use of vulgar language, after viewers complained.

The then-Public Entertainment Licensing Unit of the CID had initially asked for vulgarities to be omitted from the staging. Teater Kami explained then that the graphic language was retained in keeping with the tone of the story.

Adib, 34, understands why the play might have been shocking then. Apart from the use of four-letter words, "anak melayu" is a term indicating a representative of the Malay community. "There are all these newspaper articles about a Malay youth who won a bursary. Effendy, the writer, was an 'anak melayu' too," he says, referring to the fact that the playwright was only 19 when Teater Kami staged the play.

Adib says: "When the play came out, people took a lot of issue. Is this what Malay youth are supposed to be like? Sometimes you don't want to acknowledge it, you want to highlight achievements, not misdeeds."

The cast includes Tysha Khan, Fadhil Daud, Amirah Yahya, Mastura Oli, Hafiz Hanafi and Mish'aal Syed Nasar.

Effendy is not involved in the staging, but says he is curious to know how this generation of Malay theatre-makers locates it in contemporary society. "What and where is the rage?"

BOOK IT / ANAK MELAYU

WHERE: Malay Heritage Centre, 85 Sultan Gate
WHEN: Tomorrow to Friday, 8pm; Saturday, 3 and 8pm
ADMISSION: $30 (standard), $25 (students and seniors). E-mail teaterkami@hotmail.com or call 6733-8969
INFO: Advisory (some mature content). Performed in Malay with English surtitles

It still exists, says Adib. "The language and images on stage could be less impactful today, but the characters remain," he adds, referring to the fact that there are many young people who lack opportunity and access to a better way of life.

Cast members Mastura and Amirah have acquaintances similar to the teen characters in Anak Melayu. "These are the kinds of people you see in school, the characters that there is gossip about," says 22-year-old Mastura. "In some ways it's so sad. We shouldn't talk about them like this. They are not bad children."

Amirah, 26, was in another production about Malay youth issues last year, the tongue-in-cheek Anwar Hadi Ramli script, The (Assumed) Vicious Cycle Of A (Melayu) Youth. It looked at milestones in a young Singaporean's life, including choice of higher education and career.

"That play was still hopeful of change. This is hopeless, nothing is going to change," she says. "Like Adib says, these are the characters swept under the rug."

Writing career ignited by a short story about a bad date

Kristen Roupenian's Cat Person was a talking point amid the #MeToo movement in 2017 and earned her book and TV deals

Olivia Ho

In December 2017, aspiring American author Kristen Roupenian got her short story, Cat Person, published in The New Yorker magazine.

She received the customary congratulations from friends and family, after which she thought the fuss would die down.

It was three days before she realised her story had gone wildly, unprecedentedly viral.

Cat Person, about a bad date between Margot, 20, and Robert, 34, became the most divisive short story of this millennium.

Margot meets Robert, who may or may not have cats, at the cinema where she works. After they go on a date and have consensual but terrible sex, which she feels pressured into, she "ghosts" him, ignoring him. In the final line of the story, he texts her: "Whore."

Cat Person tapped into the zeitgeist of the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment, however unintentionally.

It spawned numerous think pieces – from women who identified with Margot and from men who vilified her behaviour towards Robert.

It became The New Yorker's most-read piece of fiction in 2017 and also one of its most-read pieces overall that year.

It earned Roupenian a seven-figure two-book deal, an HBO television adaptation, a worldwide readership and plenty of online vitriol.

The attention was "frightening" and took all of last year to process, she tells The Straits Times over the telephone from London, where she is on a book tour for her debut short story collection, You Know You Want This.

"In the moment, I thought it was very overwhelming, but the farther I got away from it, the more I felt lucky and proud that the story had such an unexpected life," she says. "It clearly meant a lot to many people and that started a lot of really good conversations."

Though many assumed Cat Person was autobiographical, Roupenian is not, like Margot, a 20-year-old college student. She is 37 and in a relationship with another woman.

The story was actually inspired by an online interaction she had when she started dating again after getting out of a long relationship and got into a spat with someone she had been exchanging messages with.

"It was nothing like the date in the story, but it did make me see that it is a function of online dating that you are given a scattered amount of information about a person," she says.

"There is a temptation to imagine a whole other person on the other side of the interaction that might not exist at all, and it might be a difficult and scary process to see how wrong you are."

> **I don't think you can be a woman writing on the Internet, especially about sex, without attracting a certain amount of hostility from its trollish underbelly. That is unsettling, even when you're expecting it.**
>
> **KRISTEN ROUPENIAN,** on the attention she received for Cat Person, which was published in The New Yorker magazine

The story's success made Roupenian an overnight expert on millennial dating, a role that continues to mystify her. "Dating advice is impossible to give, always. What do I know?"

Young women approach her to ask for advice on their love lives. She also received more bizarre responses, such as e-mail messages from men sharing their own sexual encounters, which they thought she would "just like to know".

Online, backlash came in the form of articles such as "Dear Cat-Person Girl" by The National Review, a conservative site, which lambasted Margot for having had too many sexual partners.

"I felt there was something oddly presumptive about it," says Roupenian. "It was absurd. She's a fictional character."

She adds: "I don't think you can be a woman writing on the Internet, especially about sex, without attracting a certain amount of hostility from its trollish underbelly. That is unsettling, even when you're expecting it."

Roupenian – whose various occupations over the years have included a PhD at Harvard University in African literature, volunteering with the Peace Corps in Kenya and working as a nanny – spent six years working on her collection.

The book deal means she can be a full-time writer and not have to seek another job.

"I spent most of my adulthood as a student or an adjunct teacher," she says. "I never had a house or a retirement account. I wasn't even sure how to pay health insurance. The big change in my life has been acquiring all the trappings of adulthood I hadn't been able to achieve until the book sold."

She has concerns that Cat Person's runaway celebrity might overshadow the other 11 stories in her collection, which are of a markedly different bent.

Several involve body horror – flesh melded together, parasites burrowing under skin, a woman magicking up her dream guy so she can cut him daily and use his blood for spells.

"I was always a horror fan," says Roupenian, who inherited a love for Stephen King from her mother and is now working on two screenplays – one for a slasher flick and the other a horror movie set in a rehabilitation centre.

She is also writing a novel, which she declines to speak about.

"I am drawn to books that will unsettle me in some way, working in that space between the compelling and the revolting. You want to look away, but you can't."

She adds: "I feel very lucky that the book sold to editors who were willing to let it be the weird, dark thing it was and didn't pressure me into writing 11 other versions of Cat Person."

One thing she could certainly do without is all the cat jokes which people keep making around her.

For the record, she has a cat, but does not consider herself a cat person. "Owning a cat does not make you a cat person," she says.

Among the 12 stories in Kristen Roupenian's new short story collection, You Know You Want This, are several involving body horror. PHOTOS: JONATHAN CAPE, URSZULA SOLTYS

oliviaho@sph.com.sg

Review

Bizarre, jarring with flashes of promise

FICTION
YOU KNOW YOU WANT THIS
Kristen Roupenian
Jonathan Cape/ Hardcover/
227 pages/$27.95/Books Kinokuniya
★★★½☆

Olivia Ho

When Kristen Roupenian's short story Cat Person came out of nowhere in 2017 and took the Internet by storm, she put into words the uncomfortable anxiety of expecting an encounter, or a person, to turn out one way and realising that he is something else altogether.

By dint of the hype around Cat Person, some of that dissonance has crept into this debut collection of short stories because Roupenian loves her body horror.

Readers are going to come into this expecting witty takes on modern love and leave instead with images of twisted flesh and ocular violation.

What all the stories of You Know You Want This have in common is that they are very unpleasant.

A couple take in their friend after he goes through a bad break-up, only for their relationship to develop into a nasty menage a trois. A narcissistic princess refuses to marry and becomes infatuated with a partner composed of a mirror, a bucket and an old thigh bone. A birthday party hiding game turns into a fleshy nightmare.

This genre-straddling is often jarring – Roupenian displays at times a great knack for subtlety, only to toss it to the winds in favour of going full throttle on the squick factor.

Cat Person remains one of the better stories and is matched by The Good Guy, which proves an apt foil with its blackly funny dive into the psyche of Ted, the kind of "nice guy" who has managed to weaponise the "friend zone", and his attempts to rationalise his sadism.

One thing to appreciate about this collection is that it is not a clear-cut clarion call for the #MeToo movement, from which Cat Person became inextricable.

Its stories thrive in problematic spaces. Women are just as much the aggressors in these tales as they are victims, if not more so. In Scarred, for instance, the narrator summons the man of her dreams into a magic circle so that she can cut him daily and collect his blood for spells.

Particularly delightful is the last story, Biter, which puts a sly twist on #MeToo and workplace sexual harassment. Ellie, who works in communications crafting e-mails nobody reads, fantasises about biting her attractive male co-worker. She dreams of how the tendons of his arm would "roll and snap beneath (her) jaw".

Being bitten is just so bizarre that she reckons he might simply pretend it never happened because nobody would believe him. "And then part of (his) brain would be reserved for keeping track of where, exactly, Ellie was... He would remember her for the rest of his life; they'd be joined by the glistening strands of his fear."

Uneven though the collection may be, it shows flashes of real promise. Just don't read it before a dinner date. It will make you lose your appetite.

If you like this, read: Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?, a short story by Joyce Carol Oates collected in High Lonesome: New And Selected Stories 1966-2006 (Ecco, 2007, $30.48, Books Kinokuniya), in which pretty 15-year-old Connie is approached by the sinister Arnold Friend, who wants to take her for a ride.

Library talks by seasoned journalists
CO-ORGANISED BY THE STRAITS TIMES AND NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD
askST@NLB
you ask, we answer, come listen

Under the skin of a world-class athlete

Speakers

Rohit Brijnath
Assistant Sports Editor, The Straits Times

Jasmine Ser
National shooter

B1-01 Programme Zone, Central Public Library, 100 Victoria Street
Thursday, March 7, 2019 | 7 to 8.30pm
(Registration starts at 6pm)
Sign up at http://str.sg/askRohit1
For more information, go to www.straitstimes.com/askst

Review

Violent fantasy world not for the faint of heart

Man Booker Prize winner Marlon James' first book in his Dark Star trilogy weaves a brilliant, dizzying tapestry of myths

FICTION
BLACK LEOPARD, RED WOLF
By Marlon James
Riverhead Books/Paperback/
624 pages/$32.10/Books Kinokuniya/
★★★★☆

Olivia Ho

The film rights to Black Leopard, Red Wolf by Jamaican novelist Marlon James (above) have been bought by Black Panther (2018) star Michael B. Jordan and Warner Bros. PHOTO: MAN BOOKER PRIZES/THE BOOKER PRIZE FOUNDATION

Jamaican novelist Marlon James' epic fantasy has been touted as a response to J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord Of The Rings, one that makes use of African mythology, where black men are not the "half-trolls" out of Far Harad dismissed by Tolkien in a passing reference, but the milieu of a whole world.

Black Leopard, Red Wolf, the first in James' Dark Star trilogy, is a huge, relentlessly rich novel likely to go far – Black Panther (2018) star Michael B. Jordan and Warner Bros have already bought the film rights.

It has a hallucinatory quality to it, like an extremely long fever dream. It clocks in at more than 600 pages, though still fewer than the misleadingly titled A Brief History Of Seven Killings, which won James the Man Booker Prize in 2015.

It is narrated by Tracker, a man with a nose – a gift for scenting and tracking anyone over long distances. He also has a mouth, to the chagrin of those who hired him for his nose, not his sparkling conversation.

"I would love to greet this sun and bid it good-bye without killing a man," is the kind of thing he says to new acquaintances.

Tracker has a dark family history, an eye taken from a wolf and a heart of gold. Early on, he becomes the caretaker of a group of "mingi" children, born different and abandoned by their birth parents. They are raised in a treehouse, X-Men style, by a Sangoma, a witch, with the help of the Leopard, who shapeshifts between man and beast.

But tragedy strikes this newfound family and the narrative picks up with Tracker again years later – a dissolute, disaffected mercenary drawn reluctantly by Leopard into a quest.

As with The Lord Of The Rings, this quest has a fellowship of nine, though these are no noble heroes and they spend more of the mission at one another's throats than fighting side by side.

There is the old Moon Witch Sogolon. There is the river goddess Bunshi, who can melt into a black puddle. There is Sadogo, a giant bred as a slaver and executioner, who will talk your ear off mournfully reliving his countless crimes, whom this reviewer finds to be the most engaging character in the novel.

The quest is to find a young boy who has been kidnapped by monstrous beings, although the child's origin is a mystery and shifts every other chapter.

The reader knows from the beginning that the quest is a failure – Tracker's first line is: "The child is dead. There is nothing left to know."

The book appears convoluted, even deliberately disorienting, although it is in fact exactingly plotted. By its bloody end, no strand is left hanging.

James weaves a brilliant, dizzying tapestry of myths – shadow assassins called the Omoluzu who come out of holes in the ceiling to the call of blood; Bad Ibeji, a parasite that starts feeding on its own twin in the womb; the Adze, who turns into a swarm of flies that burrow into his enemies' flesh and drain them dry.

The vividness of his writing is palpable even in throwaway directions: "The midnight street! Go to the end, and turn right past the dead tree, then down the three sets of steps, deep in the dark. So dark that you can't see, only feel. He in the house of a witchman with the heart of an antelope rotting on the door."

The novel possesses levels of graphic violence to rival Game Of Thrones. There is an unforgettably horrific scene in which an eyeball is sucked out of someone's head while he is still conscious.

The violence feels not so much gratuitous as intrinsic to the fabric of this world, but even so, there is so much of it, it begins to have a deadening effect after a point, with the exception of the devastating ending.

This is not helped by the narrative tendency towards repetition, as well as the vaunting machismo of Tracker's voice.

Black Leopard, Red Wolf is a laudable addition to the genre, even if the thought of two more books in this vein – James has said they will retell the same events from different perspectives, Rashomon-style – is exhausting.

But there is no place in this fantasy for the faint-hearted.

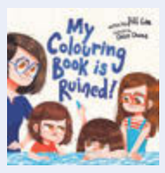
If you like this, read: Who Fears Death by Nnedi Okorafor (HarperCollins, 2010, $18.34, Books Kinokuniya). In a post-apocalyptic Sudan, young sorceress Onyesonwu sets out to defeat her father, who raped her mother as part of a campaign of genocide.

oliviaho@sph.com.sg

Singapore Shelf

CHILDREN'S
DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?
By Felix Cheong,
illustrated by Anngee Neo
Straits Times Press/Paperback/
40 pages/$16.90/
Major bookstores

Cheong wants to make reading poetry fun for kids in this collection of 15 whimsically illustrated poems, from riddles to comic verse.



MY COLOURING BOOK IS RUINED!
By Jill Lim,
illustrated by Chloe Chang
Straits Times Press/Paperback/
36 pages/$16/Major bookstores

Claire is horrified to find that her older sister Kate has scrawled all over her colouring book. Kate has autism and does not like to colour books the way most children do.

As Claire talks more to the rest of her family about Kate, she begins to understand her sister has her own abilities.

This is the first book by Lim, a mother of three daughters, the oldest of whom is autistic.

FICTION
LOVE, LIES AND INDOMEE
By Nuril Basri, translated by Zedeck Siew
Epigram Books/Paperback/
248 pages/$20.40/
Major bookstores and epigrambooks.sg

Epigram brings in its first Indonesian novel in translation, about the travails of boyfriend-desperate Ratu, who trawls the Internet searching for her dream man.

To stave off her mother's nagging and the threat of an arranged marriage, she hires handsome freeloader Hans as a fake boyfriend.

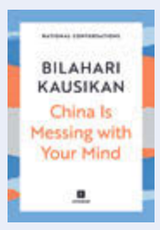
NON-FICTION
THEY TOLD US TO MOVE: DAKOTA-CASSIA
Edited by Ng Kok Hoe, Rocky Howe, Lim Jingzhou and Sammie Ng
Ethos Books/Paperback/
268 pages/$25/
Books Kinokuniya, Times, MPH, Grassroots Book Room and www.ethosbooks.com.sg

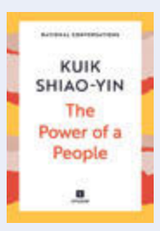
This book documents the moving of an entire community – that of Dakota Crescent, one of Singapore's oldest public housing estates.

Its primarily low-income and elderly residents were relocated in 2016 to Cassia Crescent to make way for the estate's redevelopment.

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy Assistant Professor Ng Kok Hoe joins forces with the Cassia Resettlement Team, a ground-up volunteer group, for this probing look at social intervention and urban displacement.

It combines essays by academics and reflections by volunteers with the voices of the residents themselves.





RATIONAL CONVERSATIONS
By Alfian Sa'at, Bilahari Kausikan, Kirsten Han and Kuik Shiao-Yin
Epigram Books/Paperback/
48 pages/$8 before GST each/
Major bookstores

These four chapbooks collect thought-provoking essays and speeches on Singaporean issues, including writer Alfian Sa'at's A Manifesto For Arts Funding, former diplomat Bilahari Kausikan's China Is Messing With Your Mind (left above), journalist Kirsten Han's The Silhouette Of Oppression, and former Nominated Member of Parliament Kuik Shiao-Yin's The Power Of A People (left).

Olivia Ho

Bestsellers

FICTION

1. **(1) Love Looks Pretty On You** by Lang Leav
2. **(2) The Travelling Cat Chronicles** by Hiro Arikawa
3. **(4) I Owe You One** by Sophie Kinsella
4. **(5) Crazy Rich Asians** by Kevin Kwan
5. **(3) The Next Person You Meet In Heaven** by Mitch Albom
6. **(10) The Five People You Meet In Heaven** by Mitch Albom
7. **(7) Legends Of The Condor Heroes #2: A Bond Undone** by Jin Yong
8. **(-) Legends Of The Condor Heroes #1: A Hero Born** by Jin Yong
9. **(9) Sea Of Strangers** by Lang Leav
10. **(-) Sad Girls** by Lang Leav

NON-FICTION

1. **(1) Becoming** by Michelle Obama
2. **(3) The Subtle Art Of Not Giving A F*ck** by Mark Manson
3. **(2) This Is What Inequality Looks Like** by Teo You Yenn
4. **(6) The Art Of Thinking Clearly** by Rolf Dobelli
5. **(4) Billion Dollar Whale** by Tom Wright and Bradley Hope
6. **(5) Brief Answers To The Big Questions** by Stephen Hawking
7. **(10) Sapiens: A Brief History Of Humankind** by Yuval Noah Harari
8. **(9) The Things You Can See Only When You Slow Down** by Haemin Sunim
9. **(-) The Future Is Asian** by Parag Khanna
10. **(-) 21 Lessons For The 21st Century** by Yuval Noah Harari

CHILDREN'S

1. **(1) Dog Man #6: Brawl Of The Wild** by Dav Pilkey
2. **(2) Dog Man #5: Lord Of The Fleas** by Dav Pilkey
3. **(7) Roblox Top Adventure Games** by Egmont
4. **(-) Geronimo Stilton #71: Geronimo On Ice!** by Geronimo Stilton
5. **(4) Dork Diaries #13: Tales From A Not-So-Happy Birthday** by Rachel Renee Russell
6. **(5) How To Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World Ultimate Movie Guide** by DreamWorks Animation
7. **(9) The Lego Movie 2 Junior Novel** by Scholastic
8. **(8) Roblox Annual 2019** by Egmont
9. **(-) Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes Of Grindelwald – The Original Screenplay** by J.K. Rowling
10. **(-) Dog Man #2: Unleashed** by Dav Pilkey

• This is The Straits Times' compilation of bestseller lists from Books Kinokuniya, Times, WHSmith and Popular bookstores.

ORGANISED BY
THE STRAITS TIMES
MIND&BODY

Take charge of your health

Hear from Dr Teo Ngee, a consultant radiologist from the Singapore Medical Specialists Centre, on how to deal with pain. Also, get tips from other doctors on various health topics, including how to manage your health risks if you are overweight.

What: The Straits Times Mind & Body Health Management Seminar
When: March 30, 2019 (Saturday), 10am to 2pm
Where: Auditorium, SPH News Centre, 1000 Toa Payoh North
Fee: $12 nett a person
(includes a goodie bag with two 1-litre packs of Marigold Peel Fresh Juice, tea break and bento lunch)

PRESENTED BY
SINGAPORE MEDICAL SPECIALISTS CENTRE

Register online at str.sg/360

A travel series every Tuesday.
The stories are also available in sgtravellers.com

SG Travellers THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL RESOURCE

sweetspot
Partner Content

BON VOYAGE

All hail the Fairy Tale King

Passion, drama and mystery take centre stage in the Bavarian state of Germany, discovers **Jac Woo**

The enchanting Neuschwanstein Castle inspired Walt Disney to design the Sleeping Beauty Castle in Disneyland. PHOTO: ISTOCK

"I want to remain an eternal mystery to myself and others," King Ludwig II once said.

I had no idea who this mysterious king was and why he said that until my group's travel director told us stories about Bavaria and its kings during our coach tour in its capital, Munich, in Germany.

And little did I expect that I would be tracing the footsteps of a "crazy" king obsessed with art and music — especially the musical dramas of composer Richard Wagner, whose "Bridal Chorus" from his opera Lohengrin is still widely played in weddings today.

My eye-opening history lesson started during our visit to Munich's Nymphenburg Palace, the summer residence of Bavarian rulers.

The Baroque palace with a lake full of white swans and an expansive garden is where the mysterious king's life story began.

King Ludwig II, born in 1845, became king of Bavaria at the age of 18, but he was more interested in architecture and the arts than politics.

Two years later, he was no longer a sovereign ruler after Bavaria lost a war. To live out his dreams in his fantasy kingdom, he started building extravagant castles and palaces for himself.

He also withdrew from the public eye, spent more time in the mountains and often travelled at night, especially in a golden carriage fitted with electric lights.

This bedazzling vehicle is on display at the Marstallmuseum in Nymphenburg Palace, together with a large collection of ornate coaches and sleighs of the Bavarian rulers.

CONTINUED ON D8

BEAUTIFUL ONE DAY
PERFECT THE NEXT

CHAN BROTHERS
BEYOND 50

Queensland AUSTRALIA

CHAN BROTHERS WHIRL ROUND THE WORLD
SUNTEC TRAVEL FAIR ENCORE SALE
OFFERS EXTENDED TILL THIS SUN, 3 MAR

Great Beach Drive 4WD Tour, Sunshine Coast

PERFECT WONDER
Great Barrier Reef, Cairns

PERFECT FAMILY FUN
Warner Bros. Movie World, Gold Coast

PERFECT ENCOUNTER
Whale Watching, Gold Coast

PACKAGE TOURS

Hotline: 6212 9660

7D GOLD COAST WITH 3 WORLDS + FARM EXPERIENCE
❁ Sea World, Movie World & Dreamworld
❁ SkyPoint Observation Deck
❁ Dreamworld ❁ Jetboat Ride
❁ Mt Nathan Winery
Dep: Mar - Sep
Up to $300 OFF Per Couple*
fr $1338

7D GOLD COAST WITH DOLPHIN EXPERIENCE
❁ Stay in Moreton Island
❁ Fishing & Yabby Pumping on Catch a Crab Cruise ❁ Oyster Farm
❁ Hand-feeding of Wild Dolphins
❁ Movie World ❁ Dreamworld
Dep: May - Sep
Up to $300 OFF Per Couple*
fr $1688

7D CAIRNS EXPLORER
❁ 5N Stay in Cairns With No Need for Change of Hotel
❁ UNESCO World Heritage Site Great Barrier Reef
❁ Hand-feeding of Kangaroos & Wallabies at Wildlife Habitat
Dep: Mar - Sep
Up to $400 OFF Per Couple*
fr $2338

free & easy+ www.ChanBrothersFreeNEasy.com
Hotline: 6212 9684
2 to Go, Daily Departure

7D CAIRNS & THE GREAT BARRIER REEF DRIVE
❁ Return Airfare ❁ 1-Way Airport Transfer
❁ 2N Accommodation in Port Douglas
❁ 4D Hertz Car Rental With NeverLost GPS
❁ Full-Day Outer Reef Cruise With Snorkelling
❁ Rainforestation Nature Park Tour
fr $1988

5D GOLD COAST WATERFRONT HOLIDAY HOMES
❁ 4N Luxury Holiday Home Stay in Gold Coast
❁ 7D Hertz Car Rental (1.8-Litres) With Neverlost GPS ❁ Sea World Helicopter 10min Helicopter Ride
❁ Warner Bros. Movie, Movie World & Sea World, Paradise Country Admission
1st Child TRAVELS FREE*
Land Only based on 6 share fr $788

6D THE GREAT QUEENSLAND CAMPERVAN ROAD TRIP
❁ 5N Holiday Parks Powered Site Camping Fee
❁ 6D Britz Campervan Rental With Max. Insurance & "Sizzle & Stay Connected" Bundle
❁ Full-Day Great Beach Drive 4WD Tour
❁ Australia Zoo Admission
Choice of 1 Unique Experience
Land Only fr $1188

All prices are subjected to associated taxes & surcharges correct at time of print & subject to change fr $0 to $205
*Selected tours & departures; conditions apply. While stocks last. All information is correct at time of print. (TA 109)

CHAN BROTHERS TRAVEL 6438 8880 WWW.CHANBROTHERSAUSTRALIA.COM
150 South Bridge Road #07-01 Fook Hai Building Mon - Fri 10am - 7pm Sat 10am - 6pm Sun & PH 12nn - 6pm

南和亿 Nam Ho Travel

Bloom into the Spring

EARLY BIRD BONUS UP TO $1,000* OFF per couple

MEMBERSHIP
To Enjoy More Benefits, Sign Up TODAY for FREE!
NAM HO TRAVEL MILES
• No Annual Fees • More Holiday Savings
• More Redemption Rewards
• 250 Bonus Points for NEW Member
http://www.namho.com.sg/memberships

UP TO 35%* OFF TRAVEL INSURANCE *Selected tours only *T&Cs apply
FREE GIFT* *T&Cs apply
2nd Pax up to 50% OFF* *T&Cs apply
FREE Trolley Luggage with credit card charges per cardmember* *T&Cs apply
FREE Rental of WIFI router* *T&Cs apply

China
8/10D 88.3Jia FM DJ Jia Ming Shandong + Henan Tour (CNSDP8/P9/P9/P1)
• Tai'erzhuang Ancient City, Red Rock Gorge
• Nishan Holy Land Cultural Tourism Resort
• Shimei'an Scenic Area, Daming Lake New District
• Black Tiger Spring, Tao Hua Yuan, Caozhou Peony Garden
Flora Dep: Apr 8,9,10 (2nd pax) fr$883*

8D Nanning/Guilin/Yangshuo/Longsheng Tour (CNNNG8)
• Xiangshan Scenic Area, Liu Sanjie Landscape Park
• Experience the ethnic customs of Datang Bay
• Explore World Cave - Silver Rock
Dep: Apr 18,20 May 18,25 Jun 1
NO Shopping Tour
fr$999* 1-FOR-1*

Korea
8D Iconic Korea (KR88B)
• Mt Jangbok Sculpture Park
• Yeojwacheon Stream and Bridge
• Kyunghwa Train Station, Bomun Lake
• One Mount Snow Park, Seongsan Sunrise Park
• Gamcheon Santorini Village, Bomun Lake
• Gyeongbokgung Palace + Hanbok Experienc
Dep: Mar 28,29,30,31 Apr 1,2,3,4 fr$1118*
Cherry Blossom Special!

8D Inspiring Korea (KR8IPJ)
(Seoul, Busan, Jeju, Gyeonggi-do, Gyeongju)
• Everland, Jeju Horse Riding, Play K-Pop Museum
• Oryukdo Skywalk & Spa Land Centum City
• Visit UNESCO World Heritage-Seokguram Grotto, Gyeongbokgung Palace
• The Painters: HERO Show
• Guam Farm + Korean Rope Weaving Experience
Most Scenic Busan Jeju
Dep: Mar 8,12,13,14,19,20, 21,23,28 Apr 3,6,10,11,17,18,19, 20, 24, 27 May - Oct fr$1118*

Malaysia
2D Malacca/Kluang Tour (MY2MZK)
• 1N stay @ Hatten Place
• Kluang Coffee Powder Factory
• Organic Park Tour, Jonker Street
• Freeport A'Fomosa Outlet, Tian Poh Gong
Dep: Mar 16,30 Apr 13,27 May 11,25 Jun 8,22 fr$178*
Best Value!

3D2N Bagan Datoh Fishing Village (Sky Mirror/Blue Tears) with Sekinchan (MY38DS)
• 1N stay @ Bagan Datoh Fishing Village
• 1N stay at Sekinchan
• Sky mirror, Blue Tears (Boat Outing)
• Sekinchan - A-ma house/Paddy Museum/ Wishing Tree/Pantai Redang Beach
• Telok Intan-Leaning Tower
Dep: Mar 2 Apr 6,20 May 4,18 Jun 15 fr$338*

Japan
Exclusive Recommendation
7/9D Central Japan, Shiragawa-Go, Alpine Route + Wakayama (JPG7/JPG9/JPALP)
• Visit World's UNESCO – Shiragawa-go Ogimachi Gassho Village
• Kiyomizudera Temple, Mt Fuji 5th Station
• Experience wearing Kimono
• 6 transportations through Kurobe Alpine Route
• Sanno-machi street of Takayama
• Wasabi farm, seafood market, Kinokuni Fruit Village & Soy Sauce Factory
Dep: Mar-Dec 2019 (2nd pax) fr$1344* (1st pax: fr$2688)

6/7/9D Hokkaido (JPHV6/JPH7/JPHT7/JPH9)
• Hakodate: Goryokaku Tower, Asaichi Morning Market & Mt Hakodate Night View
• Eat all you can! – 3 kinds of crab, sashimi, sushi & traditional ramen
• Enjoy seasonal flowers bloom in Furano Floral Farm
• Experience Jidaimura (Edo Wonderland) + Ninja Show
• Experience fruit picking + ice cream making (Seasonal)
Dep: Apr-Oct 2019 (2nd pax) fr$999* (1st pax: fr$1998)

Australia
8D Melbourne & Sydney Parade 6D Magnificent Melbourne Discovery (AU6MMD)
• Dolphin watching + 4WD @ Port Stephen
• Old Puffing Billy Steam Train
• Antartic Journey @ Nobbies Centre
• Penguin Parade + Lobster Dinner
(8D) May 1 Jun 10 Aug 7
(6D) May 17 Jun 7,13,20 Aug 9 Sep 6,10,20 Oct 23 (2nd pax) fr$752* (1st pax: fr$1506)

6D4N Perth Mandurah & Farmstay (AUSPMF)
• Watch wildlife dolphins swimming
• Farm activities with 1N stay
• Shop at Fremantle Market
• Caversham Wildlife Park
Dep: Jun 1,20 Sep 6 Oct 24 Nov 14 (2nd pax) fr$666* (1st pax: fr$1332)
NEW! Elizabeth Quay Eco Swan Cruise

Europe
9/10/11/14D Let's GO Central Europe
• Unlimited Tobogganing & Sledging
• World Highest Alpine Coaster
• Free upgrade 2N @ Hyatt Regency Paris Etoile
• Free upgrade in Alpine Resort
Dep: Mar-Dec 2019 fr$2199* 1-FOR-1*

Turkey
10D8N Turkey Delights (TUR10D)
• 2N stay in Cappadocia Cave Hotel
• Salt Lake Tuz (Sky Mirror)
• Turkish Bath
• Belly Dance Dinner with Drink
Dep: May-Oct 2019 fr$2198* 1-FOR-1*

Taiwan
8D ¿❤ Taiwan (TW8ITW)
• 1N stay at Toucheng Leisure Farm
• Rabbit pencil DIY
• Toroko National Park • JiJi Train station
• Train ride to Hualien • Anping Old Street
• Sun Moon Lake • Wen Wu Temple
• Taitung Hot Spring Resort
• Lunch @ Taipei 101-85th floor
Train ride to Hualien
Dep: Mar 16,24,27,30 Apr 1,3,6,10,13, 15,17,20,21,24,28,29 May 1,4,5,8,12,15,18,20,22,26,27,29 Jun-Oct fr$838*

8D Enchanting Taiwan (TW8ENC)
• 1N stay at Leofoo Resort with Theme Park
• 1N stay at Alishan Long Yun Leisure Farm
• Jingtong Station Sky Lantern
• Taichung Flora Expo, Pier-2 Art Center
• Ten Drum Ciaotou Creative Park
• Rainbow Military Dependents Village
• Alishan National Forest Recreation Area
• Enjoy local street food at 3 famous Night Market
1D F&E in Taipei
Dep: Mar 21,23,24,28 Apr 1,3,6,10,15, 17,20,21,24,27,28,29 May 1,4,5,8,11,12,15,18,20,22,25, 26,27,29 Jun-Oct fr$798*

Thailand
4/5D Chiang Mai Chiang Rai + 2N Bangkok F&E (TH4LC/5LC/5LCB)
• Long Neck Women Village, White Temple
• Elephant Safari & Elephants at Work
• Khatoke Dinner with Hill Tribe Show
• Mekong River, Golden Triangle
• Doi Suthep Temple, Art in Paradise
Water Festival Dep: Apr 10,12,17
(4D) MI/TR Dep: Apr 13, May 17, Aug 9
(5D) MI/TR Dep: Mar 20, Apr 27,30 May 1, 18 Jun 1,4,5,12,18,19,22 Aug 6 Sep 7,11
(7D) TG Dep: Jun 2,9,16,23 Sep 8 + Daily Departure fr$568*

4/5/6D Bangkok Khao Yai Discovery (TH4BKY/5BKY/BKYF)
• Magic Cave & DIY Activities at Secret Garden
• Hobbit House, Primo Piazza
• Farm Activities & set lunch @ Farm Chokchai
• Asiatique Night Bazaar, Palio Mall
(4D) Dep: Apr 18 May 17 Aug 9 + Every Thur
(5D) Dep: Mar 20 Apr 10,24 May 1 Jun 5,12,19,26 + Every Wed
(6D) Dep: Mar 19 Jun 4,11,18,25 + Every Tue fr$548*

Vietnam
5D Hanoi-Trang An-Halong Bay (VNG5HL)
• Syrena Cruise
• Trang An Scenic Landscape Complex
• Vietnamese cuisine: Pho, Cha Ca La Vong
Overnight Cruise!
Dep: Mar-Dec 2019 fr$688*

5D Central Vietnam Discovery (VNG5CV)
• Bana Hills, Dragon Bridge
• Hoi An Japanese Covered Bridge
• Linh Ung Pagoda, Le Jardin D'Amour
• Alpine Coaster, Fantasy Park
Dep: Mar-Dec 2019 fr$788*

#01-84D/E People's Park Complex
E-mail: sales_enquiries@namho.com.sg
Website: www.namho.com.sg (TA140)
Opening Hours: Mon-Sat: 9am-8pm
Sun & PH: 10:30am-6:30pm

Enquiry Hotline 6221 8433 | Ticketing 6221 8439 | M.I.C.E 6224 2995

*Price does not include airport taxes and fuel charges (between $80-$950). Terms & conditions apply.
All information is correct at time of print.

CONTINUED FROM D7

All hail the Fairy Tale King

Above: Hansel and Gretel House is one of the many charming buildings with colourful frescoes in Oberammergau. Below: Hohenschwangau Castle, where King Ludwig II grew up in, was his inspiration to design his own fairy tale castle. PHOTOS: ISTOCK

Passion and prayer

My tour included a visit to Oberammergau, a quaint village with buildings that have an old-world charm and colourful frescoes that look straight out of fairy tales.

It is most famous for holding the world's longest-running and largest stage production of Passion Play, which depicts the last days of Jesus' life.

Held once every 10 years since 1634, the play is performed to fulfil a vow made by the locals after the village was spared from the grip of the Black Plague.

The massive production engages a cast of around 2,000 locals (including 450 children), which makes up almost half the population of the village, and takes place in a 4,500-seater Passion Play Theatre.

There are roles for folks of all ages, so it is not surprising that many locals have performed in the play at least once in their lifetime. Sometimes, the whole multi-generation family — from toddlers to grandparents — would be acting together.

The next Passion Play will be from May to October 2020 and is expected to draw 500,000 visitors from all over the world.

I was also amazed that the play has been performed for almost 400 years.

In fact, King Ludwig II watched the Passion Play in a special private performance in 1871. He was so impressed that he presented a 12m-tall marble Crucifixion Group sculpture, the largest stone monument in the world then, to the Oberammergau people.

For three years, he made an annual trip to the monument for prayers.

King Ludwig II's close ties with the village could also be because his favourite residence, Linderhof Palace, was nearby.

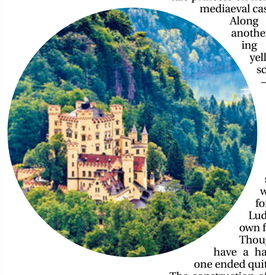
Tragic fairy tale

Neuschwanstein Castle, which sits on a ridge with a dramatic mountain backdrop in Füssen, is the most impressive building constructed by King Ludwig II.

The design was so iconic that Walt Disney used it as a model for the fairy tale castle in Disneyland.

To arrive at the castle like royalty, I sat in a carriage drawn by two horses that trotted slowly up to a mountain covered by beautiful autumn foliage.

The carriage was not golden and I was not wearing a gown. Nevertheless, I felt like a fairy tale princess on her way to a ball in a mediaeval castle.



Along the way, I saw another mediaeval-looking castle — the yellow-hued Hohenschwangau Castle — near the base of the mountain.

I heard that this was a castle that King Ludwig II grew up in. Built by his father, Hohenschwangau Castle was an inspiration for the young Ludwig to design his own fairy tale castle.

Though most fairy tales have a happy ending, this one ended quite tragically.

The construction of Neuschwanstein (called the "New Castle" then) started in 1869, when the king was 24 years old. It was still not fully completed when the king, who never married, moved into it 15 years later.

As his extravagant building projects nearly bankrupted Bavaria, the "Fairy Tale King" was soon declared insane by his government.

In 1886, the 41-year-old royal and his psychiatrist were found dead in Lake Starnberg and their deaths remained a mystery. Since then, the castle was named Neuschwanstein ("meaning New Swan Stone") and opened to the public.

Till this day, it was never completed, yet it is one of the most visited and photographed castles in the world.

The swan rules

As I queued up with dozens of tour groups waiting to enter Neuschwanstein Castle, I was sure King Ludwig II would not be pleased had he known that his private retreat would one day be "invaded" by up to 6,000 tourists daily.

It is unbelievable that this colossal castle, which could house over 200 rooms, was built for one man's private use and not for official functions.

The rooms were decorated with pictures of kings and knights, poets and lovers, especially characters who were inspired by the operas of Wagner, to whom the king dedicated the castle.

The Throne Hall, which looks like a combination of a church and throne room, has a space for a throne but it was never built when the king died.

The swan was a common motif in the interiors because the king was also nicknamed the "Swan King".

He saw himself as the fictitious swan knight Lohengrin from Wagner's opera as well as a real knight of Schwangau, whose heraldic animal was the swan. This probably explained why the souvenir shop was full of swan soft toys and swan-themed decorative items.

Another unique design of the castle is that although it embraced the architecture of the Middle Ages, it was equipped with 19th-century technology.

The king ensured that it had hot air central heating, running water, hot and cold water in the kitchen, toilets with automatic flushing systems, telephones, a lift to transport meals upstairs, and an electric bell system to summon his servants.

Eccentric, passionate or ingenious, King Ludwig II's wish to remain an eternal mystery to himself and others has come true. But thanks to him, we can walk into a real-life fairy tale castle even in the 21st century.

The writer's trip was sponsored by Trafalgar.

King Ludwig II was also nicknamed the "Swan King", which explains the common use of the swan motif in his castle. PHOTO: JAC WOO

ASIA citi* FREE 20",24 & 28" Luggage* *With minimum charge of $2400 *T&Cs apply

8D Korea Dep: Mar 17,31 Apr 2 Jun 2,9,16,23 Free Gift Redemption fr$1488*

7D6N Taiwan Memorable Holiday Dep: Mar 19,26 Apr 14,21,28 May 12,19,26 Jun 2,9,16,23 Jul 14,28 Aug 4,11,25 Sep 8,15,22 fr$1088*

7D6N Okinawa & Taipei (Hong Kong) Dep: Mar-Jun 2019 fr$1688*

7D5N Japan Alpine Route Dep: Apr 16,20 May 11,30 Jun 9 (TG) May 31 (SQ) fr$2388*

7D Central Japan Golden Route Dep: Apr 16,17,18 May 16,18,25 Jun 1,8,15,22 Sakura Dep: Mar 30,31 Apr 1 fr$2188*

8D Hokkaido Dep: Apr 11,14 May 16 Jun 2,12 (Japan Airlines) Dep: May 6 (Thai Airways) Dep: Apr 9,16 May 16 Jun 4,11 (Cathay Airlines) Sakura/Shirasagi Dep: Apr 28, May 27,28 fr$2388*

9D Hiroshima (Kyushu, Shikoku, Chugoku) Dep: Mar-Oct 2019 fr$2488*

CHINA NO SHOPPING TOUR

8D Yunnan Chuxiong, Dali, Lugu Lake, Lijiang, Kunming, Shangri-La Dep: Mar 10 Apr 14,25 May 19,26 Jun 2,9 Aug 6 Sep 7 Oct 21 Nov 23,30 Dec 7,14,21 fr$1088*

8D7N Guangxi's Secret to Longevity (Nanning/Bama/Jingxi/Detian) Dep: Mar 5,16,28 Apr 18,23 May 9,23,30 Jun 4,13 fr$688*

7D Xi'an - Hukou - Valley of Wave Dep: Mar-Dec 2019 fr$888*

9D7N Charming Shandong Tour Dep: Mar 10,17,24 Apr 7,8,14,15,21,22 May 12,13,19,20,26 Jun 2,9 fr$988*

12D11N Legend of Silk Road Dep: Mar 13,27 Apr 10,19 May 15,29 Jun 5,12,19 Sep 4,18 Oct 14,22 fr$1988*

BUY ONE GET ONE FREE*

6D5N Taiwan Touch My Heart Dep: Apr 6,13,20,27 May 4,11,18 Jun 1,8, 15,22,29 Jul 6,13,20,27 Aug 3,10,17,24,31 fr$1198*

6D4N Magical Dubai (Dubai/Abu Dhabi) Dep: Apr 9,16,23 May 15,22,29 Jun 5,12,18 fr$1398*

9D7N Perfect Shanxi Dep: Mar 5,25 Apr 5,15 May 15,29 Jun 4,11 Sep 1,9 Oct 10,24 fr$1698*

PRINCESS CRUISES come back new

17D ALASKA & Canadian Rockies Tour Limited seats!!

8D Alaska Cruise to Glacier Bay National Park 8D Canadian Rockies Tour, Vancouver & Seattle City Tour

2019 Dep: May 24 Aug 30 fr$4599*

2019 Confirmed Dep: Apr 30 May 4,11,18 Jun 1,7 Sep 6

Group Discount up to $800* | Discount up to $1,000* per pax | FREE UPGRADE to Mini Suite* | FREE CRUISE GRATUITIES for 1st/2nd pax* | US$100* Onboard Credit

新新旅行社 NEW SHAN TRAVEL 50

For more information, please call: (65) 6481 1181 www.facebook.com/NewShanTravelService www.newshan.com | tours@newshan.com.sg 20 Maxwell Road, #01-02 Maxwell House, S(069113) www.instagram.com/newshantravel/ (TA106) Follow us on FB and IG for the latest promotions

Prices / Information is correct as of 25 Feb 2019. *Terms & conditions apply. Taxes: $70*-$1048*

APPLE VACATIONS SINGAPORE PTE LTD | THINK JAPAN THINK APPLE

7D HONSHU SERIES ~ FALLING IN LOVE WITH SAKURA 本州系列 ~ 櫻花の戀 CNY DEP MAR 14, 21, 28, 31 | APR 2, 4 From S$2,499

7D GLAMOROUS BUSAN JINHAE CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL 釜山鎮山 · 議海櫻花祭 CNY DEP MAR 30 | APR 5 From S$1,799

7D JAPAN ALPS ~ GASSHO VILLAGE 日本中央山脈 ~ 合掌村 CNY DEP APR 15, 16, 18, 19 From S$2,399

7D FLORAL KANTO ~ PURPLE FUJI + SHIBAZAKURA 花海关東 ~ 紫藤花田伴芝櫻海の旅 CNY DEP APR 29 2,499

7D THE KINGDOM OF KYUKYU OKINAWA 琉球王國 APR 15, 16, 18, 20 1,849

7D FOCUS JAPAN MAY 25 | JUN 1, 3 2,599

7D MIE ~ WAKAYAMA 三重 ~ 和歌山 MAY 17 | JUN 5, 13* 2,399

Be.

APPLE VACATIONS SINGAPORE PTE LTD Co. 201023674K (TA-2067) 26, Upper Cross Street Singapore 058356 APPLE LET'S HAVE A CHAT 65-6533 5161 65-8876 9528

USA VisitTheUSA.com

CHAN BROTHERS BEYOND 50

THE AMERICAN BEAT

Chan Brothers Whirl Round The World Suntec Travel Fair Encore Sale Offers Extended Till This Sun, 3 Mar

San Francisco | Las Vegas | Los Angeles

Explore America's Musical Journey From San Francisco's Rock to Nevada's Blues

PACKAGE TOURS

11/12D Highlights of Western USA / Supersaver ✈ 2N Stay in San Francisco & 17-Mile Drive, World's Most Scenic Drive Dep: Apr - Oct Hotline: 6212 9660 Up to $600 OFF Per Couple* fr$2638

11D Scenic Arizona, Yosemite & Vibrant Las Vegas ✈ 2N Stay in Las Vegas & Full-day Yosemite National Park Tour Dep: Apr - Oct Up to $600 OFF Per Couple* fr$3538

Free & easy+ ✈ Return Airfare ✈ Return Seat-in-Coach Transfer ✈ 6/7/8N Accommodation Hotline: 6212 9684 2 to Go

10D Los Angeles & Las Vegas Fantasia ✈ FREE 1N in Anaheim Dep: Daily Up to $200 OFF Per Couple* fr$3138

8/11D Eastern USA & Orlando Fantasia ✈ Daily Continental Breakfast in Orlando Dep: Wed,Sat Up to $200 OFF Per Couple* fr$3388

All prices are subjected to associated taxes & surcharges correct at time of print & subject to change fr $133 to $709 * Selected tours & departures; conditions apply. While stocks last. All information is correct at time of print. (TA 109)

CHAN BROTHERS TRAVEL 6438 8880 150 South Bridge Road #07-01 Fook Hai Building Mon - Fri 10am - 7pm Sat 10am - 6pm Sun & PH 12nn - 6pm

travel DEALS

WIN A TRIP FOR TWO TO SYDNEY

Pamper your dad or mum with a holiday in Sydney, Australia! Here's your chance to win Singapore Airlines tickets to Sydney, and a three-day-two-night Hunter Valley package by train for two.

Simply share where you would like to bring your dad or mum in Sydney in less than 250 words, and include a picture of yourself with him or her. Visit sweetspot.straitstimes.com/siasydneystories/ to participate. Closing date: March 10, 2019.

E-mail mkgstpromo@sph.com.sg for enquiries. This contest is organised by The Straits Times, Destination New South Wales and Singapore Airlines.

SQ PROMOTION:

Till March 12, the all-in return fare from Singapore to Sydney is $608 (for a minimum of two travellers). This promotion is valid for travel between April 1 and Aug 31, 2019. Blackout periods and other terms and conditions apply.

travel NEWS

NEW DREAMER SERIES — FITNESS TAKEOVER

Dream Cruises has launched its inaugural Dreamer Series that offers unique "first-at-sea" experiences featuring special edition themed cruises and enrichment programmes for millennial travellers and the young at heart.

Genting Dream is tapping on the current health and wellness trend in Singapore for the first of the Dreamer Series, Fitness Takeover. It will partner with ClassPass, a fitness platform, to offer a line-up packed with classes from high intensity interval training (HIIT) and boxing, to yoga and aerobic Latino jamming.

The Fitness Takeover cruise is scheduled from April 7 to 10. Call Dream Cruises at 6808-2288 for enquiries.

Feel like royalty as you arrive at Neuschwanstein Castle in a horse-drawn carriage. PHOTO: JAC WOO

GETTING THERE

I flew on Emirates from Singapore to Munich via Dubai.

From Munich, Neuschwanstein Castle is about two hours' drive away, while Oberammergau is about one hour's drive away.

Traveller's tips

- Visit www.bavaria.by for tourist information on castles, palaces and other attractions in Bavaria, Germany.
- Trafalgar has six itineraries for Europe tours that will include stays in Oberammergau and tickets to watch the Passion Play 2020. For Oberammergau trips in 2020, book before Feb 28, 2019 to enjoy up to 10 per cent savings. Everyone saves an additional 5 per cent if you travel in groups of five or more. Visit www.trafalgar.com for details.

www.globalholidays.com.sg

2D Batam Golden Bay fr$55 (Tour + Massage + Lunch + 3D Museum)

3D One World KL fr$228

(Include 01 Buffet Dinner)

3H Voyager Of The Seas 2nd pax fr$599

3D Ho Chi Minh fr$178

3D Hanoi fr$208

3D Taipei fr$172

3D Chiangmai fr$378

5D Bangkok/Khao Yai Up to fr$685

3D Hong Kong fr$296

4D Perth fr$758

4D Maldives fr$1318

Taxes : $29 - $320

Global Holidays Novena Square 6822 2110 The Star Vista 6694 2211 (TA 2346)

EXOTIC TRAILS

Chan's World Holidays | CHAN BROTHERS | BEYOND 50

Chan Brothers Whirl Round The World Suntec Travel Fair Encore Sale Offers Extended Till This Sun, 3 Mar

1-for-1* | Up to 50% OFF 2nd pax* | Up to $1000 OFF 2nd pax* | Up to $400 OFF per couple*

PLUS $150 OFF final offers when you apply for a Citi Credit Card with min. $500 charge* www.ChanBrothers.com/Citi

FREE Limited Edition 28" New Yorker Trolley Luggage per Citi Credit Cardmember with $5800 charge for new bookings only, while stocks last

Cultural & Gourmet Indulgences | Heritage Trails | Alluring Escapes | Nature & Wildlife Adventures

11D Ultimate Morocco With 96.3 FM DJ Anna Special Dep: Jun 4 (Up to $400 OFF Per Couple*) ➤ Stay at 4 & 5★ Accommodation Throughout ➤ Stay at Kasbah Hotel Tombouctou With Campfire Dinner Under the Stars ➤ 4WD Ride to Sahara Desert ➤ Camel Ride ➤ Sandboarding Experience ➤ Chefchaouen Walking Tour fr$2988

8D Uzbekistan "Pierre-suits" With Mediacorp Artiste Pierre Png Special Dep: Nov 6 (Up to $400 OFF Per Couple*) Exclusive Itinerary ➤ Domestic Flight to Bukhara ➤ 3N Stay at 5★ Tashkent Hotel ➤ Chimgan Mountain Resort Stay With Chairlift Ride ➤ Get-Together Dinner With Traditional Folk Show fr$2288

7D Glimpse of Nepal With Elephant Safari 1-for-1* ➤ Great Stupa of Boudhanath ➤ Elephant Safari & Jungle Walk ➤ Rapti River Canoe Ride ➤ Tibetan Refugee Camp Dep: Apr - Sep 1st pax fr $3088 2nd pax fr $0

8D Kenya Safari Glamping Experience Up to 50% OFF 2nd Pax* ➤ Safari Land Cruiser Hire With English-Speaking Driver ➤ Full Board Throughout ➤ All Park Entry Fees Special Dep: May 31 Jun 21 Jul 5 Aug 16 2nd pax fr $2294

10D Kenya & Tanzania Wildebeest Migration Up to $1000 OFF 2nd Pax* ➤ Safari Land Cruiser Hire With English-Speaking Driver cum Guide Throughout ➤ All Park Entry Fees Special Dep: Jun 14 Jul 25 Aug 30 Sep 7 1st pax fr $6388 2nd pax fr $5388

6/8D Spectacular / Amazing Sri Lanka With Jeep Safari 1-for-1* ➤ Sigiriya Rock Fortress ➤ Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic ➤ Cinnamon Gardens ➤ Tea Plantation & Factory Dep: Apr - Sep 1st pax fr $2688 2nd pax fr $0

8/10D Uzbekistan – Trails of the Great Silk Road / Highlights of Uzbekistan 50% OFF 2nd Pax* ➤ Chimgan Mountain Resort Stay With Chairlift Ride Special Dep: Dec 20 Dep: Apr - Sep 1st pax fr $2658 2nd pax fr $1329

13/20D Wonders / Highlights of South America Up to $1000 OFF 2nd Pax* ➤ Argentine & Brazilian Side of Iguazu Falls ➤ Cable Car Ride Up Sugarloaf Mountain Dep: Apr - Dec 1st pax fr $10,998 2nd pax fr $5499

15D Discover Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan & Uzbekistan Up to $400 OFF 2nd Pax* ➤ Lake Issyk-Kul, 2nd-Largest Alpine Lake in the World ➤ Ala Archa National Park Dep: Apr - Sep 1st pax fr $3988 2nd pax fr $3588

12D Explore Israel & Jordan Up to $400 OFF 2nd Pax* ➤ Wadi Rum With 4WD Desert Experience ➤ Horseback Ride at the Sig ➤ Dead Sea Floating Experience ➤ Sea of Galilee Boat Ride ➤ Wailing Wall ➤ Mount of Beatitudes Dep: Apr - Sep 1st pax fr $4238 2nd pax fr $3838

14D Exquisite Peru & Bolivia Up to $1000 OFF 2nd Pax* ➤ 360° Machu Picchu Train Ride ➤ Uyuni Salt Flat, the World's Largest Salt Deposit ➤ Mummies of Coqueza ➤ Peruvian Paso Horse Show & Lunch Dep: Apr - Dec 1st pax fr $8388 2nd pax fr $7388

All prices are subjected to associated taxes & surcharges correct at time of print & subject to change fr $100 to $900 *Selected tours & departures; conditions apply. All information is correct at time of print.

CHAN BROTHERS TRAVEL 6212 9684 150 South Bridge Road #07-01 Fook Hai Building Mon - Fri 10am - 7pm Sat 10am - 6pm Sun & PH 12nn - 6pm www.ChanBrothers.com • cbtravel@chanbrothers.com.sg (TA 109)

CHAN'S WORLD HOLIDAYS 6507 9595 452 North Bridge Road #07-00 Chan Brothers Building Mon - Fri 10am - 7pm Sat 10am - 6pm Sun & PH 12nn - 6pm www.ChansWorld.com • cwh@chanbrothers.com.sg (TA 2346)

ASIA GLOBAL VACATION GROUP OF COMPANIES

SPRING AROUND THE WORLD SALE

Up to $400 OFF per Couple* | 50% OFF 2nd Pax* | 2nd Pax FREE* | 1st Child 50% OFF*

FREE 28" New Yorker 8-wheeler spinner trolley luggage & limited edition plush toy per Citi Credit Cardmember with $5800 charge respective for new bookings only, while stocks last

1 - 3 March 2019 (Fri - Sun)

★ No compromise of quality ★ Absolute price transparency, no hidden costs ★ 24-hours emergency support ★ Ask Us About Our Customised Packages & Bilingual Tours

AFFORDABLE SERIES ✓ NO Compulsory Optional Tours* ✓ FREE Day to Explore* ✓ Affordable Price without Compromising Quality*

JAPAN

6D JAPAN ALPINE ROUTE Ashikaga / Tateyama / Kanazawa / Gifu / Kusatsu / Matsumoto / Tokyo Enjoy opting a snow to 1 Gassho Village fr$1998*

7D Spring in Hokkaido Noboribetsu / Hakodate / Mt Yotei / Jozankei / Otaru / Sapporo ✓ 2 Nights Onsen Hotels ✓ Penguin Parade & Dolphin Show ✓ Mt Hakodate Night View ✓ View 4 UNESCO Sites ALL INCLUSIVE Dep: Apr - May 2019 fr$1998*

7D Charming Central Japan Osaka / Nara / Kyoto / Gifu Region / Mt Fuji Region / Tokyo Nature Viewing Day Date Mar 28, Apr 2,3,4 Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 1st pax fr$2598* 2nd pax fr$1299*

KOREA

7/8D DAZZLING KOREA Jeju / Busan / Daegu / Yeongju / Pyeongchang / Damyang / Seoul ✓ Seoraksan Mountain ✓ Jeongdongjin Cliff ✓ Cherry Blossom Viewing Dep Date: Mar 28, Apr 4 2019 Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 1st pax fr$1488* 2nd pax fr$744*

7/8D Southern Beauty of Korea Suwon / Jeonju / Imsil / Jeungdo / Gwangju / Damyang / Daejeon / Seoul ✓ Seoraksan Fruit Sampling* ✓ DIY Cheese Making Session ✓ Hanbok Dress-up Session Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 1st pax fr$1388* 2nd pax fr$694*

8D Fun in Korea Jeju / Yongin / Mount Seorak / Pyeongchang / Suwon / Seoul ✓ Jimjilbang Experience ✓ Play K-POP Museum Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 1st pax fr$1498* 2nd pax fr$749*

TAIWAN

7D SOUTHERN TAIWAN Xiao Liu Qiu Taichung / Yuanlin / Chiayi / Tainan / Kaohsiung / Pintung / Xiao Liu Qiu / Taipei ✓ Lin Department Store ✓ DIY Tower Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 1st pax fr$788* 2nd pax fr$550*

8D Beauty Taiwan Yilan / Hualien / Taitung / Kaohsiung/ Tainan / Chiayi / Yunlin / Taichung / Taipei ✓ Taroko National Park ✓ 1-night in Tainan Leisure Farm ✓ Dasilang Station 1N stay in Hot Spring Hotel Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 1st pax fr$928* 2nd pax fr$464*

8D Family Fun in Taiwan Hsinchu / Miaoli / Yunlin / Kaohsiung / Nantou / Taichung / Yilan / Taipei ✓ Painted Animation Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 1st pax fr$888* 2nd pax fr$444*

English-Guided Tripping Tour

Enjoy Your Visit Without Communication Barriers | Have the Groundwork of your Flight, Accommodation & Transportation Taken Care of | Professional English Speaking Guides Familiar with Asian Culture & Habits

8/9D Central Japan 50% OFF 2nd Pax ✓ Gold Leaf Painting Experience ✓ Visit 3 UNESCO World Heritage Site ✓ Tokyo cruise ship Dep: Apr - Mar 2020 fr$2344*

7D Aomori + Hokkaido 50% OFF 2nd Pax Dep: Mar - Mar 2020 fr$2094*

7/9D Korea & Jeju 50% OFF 2nd Pax ✓ Nami Island ✓ The Garden of Morning Calm ✓ D'soliloc Tea Museum Dep: Mar - Mar 2020 fr$999*

7/8D Seoul & Busan $200 OFF per couple* ✓ E-World 63 Tower ✓ Hanbok Dress-up Session ✓ Dryskuda Skywalk Dep: Mar - Mar 2020 fr$1588*

8D Round Taiwan 50% OFF 2nd Pax ✓ 1-Night Hot Spring Hotel in Taitung ✓ Sansko National Park ✓ 1-Night Leisure Farm Stay in Tainan Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 fr$794*

8D West Taiwan 50% OFF 2nd Pax ✓ Fengxia Night Market ✓ Buffet ✓ Gaomei Wetland Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 fr$744*

11D Affordable Europe MOST POPULAR Netherlands / Germany / Switzerland / France / Belgium ✓ Amsterdam - Zaanse Schans, Canal Cruise, Dam Square, Clog Factory, Royal Palace ✓ Cologne - Cologne Cathedral, Lake Titisee ✓ Lucerne - Lion Monument, Chapel Bridge ✓ Berne - Bear Pit, Clock Tower Dep: Apr - Oct 2019 fr$1698*

7/9D Golden Route of India + Kashmir Recommended for 1st Timer to India See the 'Taj' in 7 Jaipur / Agra / Delhi / Srinagar ✓ Jaipur - Chokhi Dhani, Amer Fort, Birla Mandir Temple, Jal Mahal, Hawa Mahal ✓ Agra - Taj Mahal, Agra Fort Dep: Mar - Sep 2019 fr$1148*

7D Sri Lanka Culture Dambotla / Sigiriya / Kandy / Nuwara Eliya / Colombo ✓ Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage ✓ Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic ✓ Jeep Safari at Minneriya National Park ✓ Odel Unlimited Dep: Daily | Mar - Sep 2019 fr$1468*

4/5D Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai ✓ Mu Hill Tribe Village ✓ Khantok Dinner 2-Yr-Old fr$198* 3-Yr-Old fr$198*

4/5D Round Jeju Self Drive ✓ Flexible 2 Days Kaak pass 2-Yr-Old fr$438* 3-Yr-Old fr$438*

7D Busan & Seoul 2-Yr-Old fr$698* 3-Yr-Old fr$698*

4/6D Northern Kyushu Highlights ✓ 4/5D Northern Kyushu Area Pass 2-Yr-Old fr$558* 3-Yr-Old fr$558*

5D Okinawa Highlights ✓ 1D Northern Okinawa Sightseeing Hip-hop Bus 2-Yr-Old fr$598* 3-Yr-Old fr$598*

13D Balkan Beauties + Budapest Hungary / Croatia / Bosnia & Herzegovina / Slovenia ✓ Budapest - Fishermen's Bastion ✓ Zagreb - City Tour ✓ Ston - City Walls ✓ Dubrovnik - Old City ✓ Split - Diocletian's Palace ✓ Zadar - Old City, Sea Organ Dep: Apr - Dec 2019 fr$2298* Plitvice National Park / Postojna Caves

5D Charming Kerala Alleppey / Munnar / Kochi ✓ Stay in a private mooring houseboat ✓ Chinese Fishing Nets ✓ Jewish Synagogue As seen on TV for Unique Lodging ✓ Tea Plantations Dep: Daily | Mar - Sep 2019 fr$1198*

4N Perth + Rottnest Island ✓ 4-Nights Choice of Hotels with Daily Breakfast ✓ Choice of 1 Full Day: Pinnacles with Sand Boarding, Wave Rock or Margaret River with Bussell on Jetty Tour Spot the world's biggest animal GIGNAX* LAND TOUR fr$868*

10D Iran - Land of the Great Persian Empire Shiraz / Marvdasht / Yazd / Isfahan / Kashan / Qom / Tehran ✓ Persepolis, Pasargadae ✓ Narin Castle, Pigeon Tower ✓ Pink Mosque, Shah Cheragh Mausoleum Dep: Apr - Dec 2019 1st pax fr$4398* 2nd pax fr$2199*

10D Buddhist Trails & Varanasi Sarnath / Bodhgaya / Rajgir / Nalanda / Kursinagar / Lumbini / Kapilavastu / Sravasti ✓ Mahabodhi Temple, Sacred Tank Dep: Daily | Mar - Sep 2019 fr$1848*

4N Gold Coast Theme Park Delights ✓ Movieworld ✓ Sunworld ✓ Paradise Country with BBQ lunch ✓ Harbour town shopping Enjoy Sesworld Helicopter Ride LAND TOUR fr$648*

CRUISE

2/3/5H Genting Dream Singapore Cruise Port of Call: Malacca/Kuala Lumpur/Better Island/Penang/Phuket/Langkawi/Ko Samui/Pulau Redang/Vietnam/Sandakan/North Bali/Bangkok/Sihanoukville/South Pulau Kapas/Kota Kinabalu/Brunei Sailing: Feb - Apr 2019 DREAM CRUISE fr$199*

4/5N Spice of Southeast Asia ✓ Signature Rock Climbing Wall ✓ North Star's Observation Capsule Sailing: Nov 16,21,25,30 Dec 5,9,14,19,23,28 QUANTUM OF THE SEAS fr$451*

3/4/5/7N Royal Caribbean Spice of Southeast Asia Cruise Port of Call: Port Klang / Penang / Phuket / Langkawi / Malacca VOYAGER OF THE SEAS Sailing: Mar - Jun 2019 fr$599*

18D Alaska, Canadian Rockies + Whistler Cruise Tour RUBY PRINCESS fr$5888

ASIA GLOBAL VACATION 6704 9199 www.AsiaGlobalvacation.com 101 Upper Cross Street #02-56 People's Park Centre • Mon-Fri: 11am - 8pm | Sat: 11am - 7pm | Sun & PH: 1pm- 7pm (TA1549)

All prices are subjected to associated taxes & surcharges correct at time of print & subject to change fr $67* to $700* *Selected tours & departures; conditions apply. While stocks last. All information is correct at time of print.

Obituary

Basheer store founder a kindly man

Basheer Ahamed, who died in India after a fall, allowed students to buy on credit and pay in instalments

Olivia Ho

Bookselling pioneer Basheer Ahamed, who founded the iconic Basheer Graphic Books in Bras Basah Complex, has died at the age of 83 after a fall.

His son Abdul Nasser, 54, who runs the bookstore today, said: "His death marks the end of an era. Of all the booksellers who would carry books to the offices in the 1980s and 1990s, my father was the last one."

Mr Basheer, who moved back to his home town in Tamil Nadu, India, after retirement, died in December last year after a fall down the stairs. He was surrounded by his family, who were spending the holidays with him in India.

"It was very sudden," said Mr Abdul Nasser. "He was very strong and stubborn and would ride a big motorbike even though he was 83. We thought he would live more years."

Mr Basheer leaves behind his wife, 81, five children and 12 grandchildren.

The family held a low-profile funeral and the bookstore posted nothing on its social media. It was only when long-time customers asked Mr Abdul Nasser how his father was doing that news of his death spread.

In the 1980s, the muscular Mr Basheer would lug his wares, rare books and magazines on art, design and architecture, around town in heavy suitcases. Accompanied by Mr Abdul Nasser, who joined the trade as a 19-year-old, he went door to door to show the books to clients.

He opened his brick-and-mortar bookstore in the early 1990s, which soon became a haven for Singapore's design community for its selection of books and magazines not found in mainstream stores.

His customers fondly remember his kindly manner and patience in letting them browse. He would often let design students and young professionals buy books on credit and pay him back in instalments.

Illustrator James Leong, 55, first met Mr Basheer 30 years ago while in a junior role at a small advertising agency and went on to be a regular at the Bras Basah store, visiting it at least once a month.

He said of Mr Basheer: "The Internet was not available then and a reference book like that would help us a lot. He took the trouble to bring in books that were exclusive and not easily available in Singapore."

The bookshop has struggled in recent years, hard put to match the prices set by online sellers and forced to close outlets in Hong Kong, Jakarta, Bangkok and Malaysia.

"We just keep moving on and try to understand the needs of the new generation," said Mr Abdul Nasser.

"My father would have loved to see more years for the bookstore, to know that all his hard work has paid off."

oliviaho@sph.com.sg

Long-time customers of Basheer Graphic Books in Bras Basah Complex remember Mr Basheer Ahamed (above) as a kindly and patient man. PHOTO: ST FILE

Stomping for 25 years in New York

Actors in Stomp at the Orpheum Theatre in New York use everyday objects such as brooms to create a wordless percussive explosion onstage. PHOTO: NYTIMES

NEW YORK • One man's trash can be another's treasure. That is the lesson you might take from Stomp, a New York-based stage show that has become a fixture in a city where sticking power can be hard to attain.

About to mark the 25th anniversary of its New York premiere, Stomp has endured, thanks to objects like brooms, garbage cans and wooden poles to create a wordless percussive explosion onstage.

It is the brainchild of Luke Cresswell, 55, and Steve McNicholas, 63, who still maintain creative control.

They started working together in the early 1980s. Later, they busked on the streets outside the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in a band called Pookiesnackenburger.

The group split up and the two formed an ensemble of eight performers that made its debut as Stomp at the festival in 1991.

Cresswell had been the band's percussionist; since he could carry only a few small drums, he began improvising on the street, which meant he would use surrounding objects too.

McNicholas said: "We quickly learnt how much the audience enjoyed that kind of experimentation."

After three years of international touring, the duo took the act to New York where it has never left the Orpheum Theatre in East Village.

Along the way, Stomp launched touring companies, appeared on late-night television, filmed an HBO special and collaborated with A-listers.

It has become a part of pop culture, which has not fazed the duo. "We're British and we live in England, so we're quite reserved," said McNicholas. "We're used to people telling us we're nothing special."

As the show celebrates a quarter-century in New York, here are some things you might not know about it.

- Props might seem widely available, but Cresswell said everyday objects, depending on where they are made, create different sounds. He and McNicholas have the props shipped from Britain by boat. On one voyage in the late 1990s, a freak wave hit a boat and a box carrying trash cans sank to the bottom of the North Sea.
- Stomp has used a total of 13,000 poles, 5,200 boxes of tissues and 52,000 candles during its New York run. And 7,800 bandages have been plastered on drummers who suffered injuries.
- In the late 1990s, Star Wars creator George Lucas was looking to cast Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace, the highly anticipated prequel to the franchise. He had seen Stomp on the West Coast. Cresswell recalled: "They were looking for someone really musical and with rhythm."

Lucas and the casting director invited several Stomp cast members to audition. Ahmed Best got the job – as Jar Jar Binks, who became one of the most reviled characters in Star Wars history.

- The Stomp creators have had plenty of celebrity collaborators, from singer Bette Midler to vaudevillian Bill Irwin. The founders' favourite appearance, they said, was with singer Paul Simon and late-night-show host Jimmy Fallon, performing the Simon And Garfunkel hit Cecilia on Late Night With Jimmy Fallon in 2011.
- In 1999, Cresswell and McNicholas had planned to mark the millennium scuba-diving off Micronesian island Yap, until they got a call from the office of Mrs Hillary Clinton, who was then First Lady of the United States. She requested they perform on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on New Year's Eve.

The duo dutifully did the show and skipped the scuba-diving. "Then we partied at the White House till four in the morning," Cresswell said. "It was fantastic." McNicholas added: "It was the best party I've ever been to."

NYTIMES

Comics

BABY BLUES

GARFIELD

Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
10.00 The $100,000 Pyramid 2 (HD) (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Bondi Harvest With Guy Turland (HD) (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Euromaxx (Cul)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
4.00 Rojak (PG) (V)
4.30 Survivor 37 (PG) (V)
5.20 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (V)
6.30 The $100,000 Pyramid 2 (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
7.30 Tricked (Canada) (HD) (PG) (CC) (V)
8.00 The Carbonaro Effect 4 (PG) (CC) (V)
8.30 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.45 Meet The MP 2 (PG) (V)
10.15 Lights. Camera. Singapore: Love Is Love (PG) (D)
11.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
AM
12.00 Kin (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Lion Moms (PG) (D)
1.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
2.20 Hawaii Five-0 7 (PG) (D)
3.10 Lethal Weapon (PG13) (D)
4.10 Bondi Harvest With Guy Turland (IE)
4.40 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 What's In The Fridge? 2 (HD) (V)
7.00 Tastes Of Guang Dong (IE)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Are You Up For It? (V)
10.30 Night Market Life A.K.A. Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Taste With Jason 10 (CC) (IE)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD) (News)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 The Adventures Of June (S)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 The Golden Path (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 When Duty Calls (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 I Eat Therefore I Am (CC) (IE) (Debut)
8.30 Tuesday Report – The Dream Catchers (CC) (IE)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.45 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 2017 (IE)
11.15 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.15 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.15 Wonderful World 13 (HD) (V)
2.15 Fiery Passion (D)
4.10 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Taiwan 1001 Stories (IE)
4.00 Taste From Home (CC) (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Food Secrets (CC) (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.45 Food Secrets (CC) (IE)
AM
12.40 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.35 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Land Unlimited
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Undercover Asia 6
2.00 News Now
4.02 Land Unlimited
5.00 News Now
7.02 Undercover Asia 6 (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 When We Play
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Undercover Asia 6
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 India's Game Changers
1.02 When We Play
2.00 News Now
2.30 Asia Exposed 2
3.02 Land Unlimited
4.00 News Now
4.30 India's Game Changers
5.02 When We Play
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Anjaraipetti 5 (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi (D)
4.30 Vasantham Express 5 (IE)
5.30 Mighty Raju Animation Series (S)
6.00 Raama Seetha (D)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam Varalaru (CC) (Cul)
7.30 Mella Thiranthatu Katavu 3 (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Adayaalam (CC) (Cul)
10.00 Rowthiram (PG13) (CC) (D)
10.30 Nijangal (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 Maalai Maalai Vasantham (V)
11.30 Tamil Seithi (Encore) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Justin Time (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (P)
1.00 Rob The Robot (P)
1.30 Justin Time (P)
2.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)
4.30 Shutterbugs (P)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Alvinnn!!! & The Chipmunks (S)
6.00 The New Powerpuff Girls (S)
6.30 Museum Mysteries (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Miraculous: Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir (HD) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 ATP 250: Open 13 Provence 2019 (Sports) (Delayed)
11.00 Battle Of The Network Stars (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Bibik-Bibikku (PG) (D)
5.00 Mak Cun 4 (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Medic Kid (CC) (S)
6.30 Vanila 2 (IE)
7.00 Makmum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Kelab Komedi 2 (CC) (V)
9.30 Rapuh (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Bingit 2 (PG) (D)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singteltv.com.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
8.30 Swamp People 8
9.30 Detroit Steel
10.25 The Pickers 9
11.20 Counting Cars 7
PM
12.15 Genius
1.10 Swamp People 8
2.05 Pawn Stars 18
2.35 Storage Wars: Texas 6
3.00 Storage Wars 11
3.30 Detroit Steel
4.25 The Pickers 9
5.20 Counting Cars 7
6.15 Swamp People 8
7.10 Pawn Stars 18
8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.30 Storage Wars 11
9.25 Storage Wars: Texas 5
9.55 Forged In Fire 4
10.50 Mountain Men 7

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
10.00 Making A Model With Yolanda Hadid
11.00 Up! Pretty
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 7
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 The Wrong Bed: Naked Pursuit
3.35 Atlanta Plastic
4.30 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family 2
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Top Chef Jr
7.00 The Amazing Race Canada 3
8.00 Love At First Flight
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Forgotten Evil
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
7.05 The Book Of Henry (NC16)
8.45 Starsky & Hutch (NC16)
10.25 Mona Lisa Smile (PG)
PM
12.25 The Adjustment Bureau (PG)
2.10 The Fountain (NC16)
3.45 Johnny English Reborn (PG)
5.25 Invincible (PG)
7.05 Knight And Day (NC16)
9.00 Game Night (NC16)
10.40 Game Of Thrones (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
6.45 Streets Of Fire
8.15 The Haunted Mansion
9.45 The Dead Pool
11.15 Red (PG)
PM
1.05 Strike Back 6 (NC16)
2.10 Entrapment (PG)
4.05 Back To The Future
6.00 Driven
7.55 The HBO Movie Show
8.25 Event Horizon (NC16)
10.00 Back To The Future
11.50 The Bad Seed (2018) (NC16)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
8.15 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Perfect Dating 6 (HD)
11.45 Shui Guo Zhuan (HD)
PM
12.20 Still Loving You (HD)
1.30 Chicago Typewriter (HD)
2.45 Hot Door Night 11
3.45 The Doctor (HD)
4.45 Still Loving You (HD)
6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Viva La Romance (HD)
10.00 Noble Aspirations (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
6.00 Tennis: ATP 500 Abierto Mexicano Telcel Presentado Por HSBC 2019: Day 1
PM
2.00 Table Tennis: Seamaster 2019 ITTF World Tour Hungarian Open: Women's Semi-finals, Men's Quarter-finals And Mixed Doubles Finals
6.00 ATP 500 Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships 2019: Day 2 (Session 1)
10.00 FEI Equestrian World 2019
10.30 Tennis: ATP Champions Tour 2018
11.00 ATP 500 Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships 2019: Day 2 (Session 2)

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
6.00 Magazine: The Burning Issue
6.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
7.00 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 34 West Bromwich Albion Vs Sheffield United
9.00 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13) (Live)
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Formosa Dreamers Vs Zhuhai Wolf Warriors/**2.30** Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 34 Nottingham Forest Vs Derby County/**4.30** Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)/**5.30** Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Preview
6.00 The Football Review
6.30 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19
7.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
7.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Macau Black Bears Vs Zhuhai Wolf Warriors (Live)/**9.30** Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
10.00 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 34 Nottingham Forest Vs Derby County
AM
12.00 Wrestling: WWE Experience (PG)
1.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
1.30 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Finals Chelsea Vs Manchester City
3.30 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19
3.55 Football: Coppa Italia 2018/19 Semi-finals 1 Leg 1 Lazio Vs Milan (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernoobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
3.00 Rat-A-Tat
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Craig Of The Creek
6.00 Ben 10 Challenge
6.30 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 Hawaii Five-0 7
6.50 Seal Team
7.40 American Ninja Warrior 7
9.25 Hawaii Five-0 7
10.20 Seal Team
11.10 The Amazing Race 30
PM
1.00 Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior
1.55 American Ninja Warrior 7
2.45 Hawaii Five-0 7
3.35 Seal Team
4.25 The Amazing Race 30
6.15 Hawaii Five-0 9
7.55 Bad Boys II
10.30 The Blacklist 6

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 Blindspot 3
6.50 Major Crimes 5
7.40 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow 3
8.25 Person Of Interest 4
9.15 The Flash 4
10.05 Blindspot 3
10.55 Almost Genius
11.45 Final Destination
PM
1.30 The Big Bang Theory 11
1.55 Friends 10
2.20 Blindspot 3
3.10 Almost Genius
4.00 The Flash 4
4.50 Person Of Interest 4
5.40 Major Crimes 5
6.30 The Flash 4
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 11
7.45 Friends 10
8.10 Almost Genius
9.00 Race To The Scene
9.50 Arrow 7
10.40 The Big Bang Theory 11
11.05 Friends 10
11.30 Race To The Scene

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.55 Just For Laughs Gags 14
7.20 Mr Bean
7.50 Most Ridiculous 2
8.15 Amazingness
8.40 Mr Bean
9.10 Caraoke Showdown
9.35 Just For Laughs Gags 14
10.00 Hot In Cleveland 3
10.50 Mr Bean
11.20 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.10 The Daily Show 24
12.35 Margaret Cho And Friends
1.20 The Comedy Jam
2.10 Saturday Night Live 43
3.00 Mr Bean
3.30 Just For Laughs Gags 14
3.55 Lip Sync Battle 4
4.45 Hood Adjacent With James Davis
5.35 The Jim Jefferies Show
6.00 The Daily Show 24
6.25 Above Average Presents
6.35 Your Face Or Mine 3
7.05 Amazingness
7.30 Billy On The Street 4
7.55 Inglorious Pranksters
8.05 Stand-up, Asia! 3
9.00 Dr Ken
10.00 Just Another Immigrant: Romesh Ranganathan
10.05 The Family Law 3
10.30 Inside Amy Schumer 2
10.55 Above Average Presents
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 Above Average Presents
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
6.00 Taste Of Love
7.00 The Destiny Of White Snake
8.00 King Of Blaze
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 The Destiny Of White Snake
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 King Of Blaze
5.00 The Destiny Of White Snake
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 The Destiny Of White Snake
10.00 King Of Blaze
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
You need to take care of something new and unusual. Things are going to change in a big way.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
Your deep thoughts are working themselves out in a new way. Find a way to express yourself.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
Your energy determines the outcome of your struggle, whatever it may be.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
You need to deal with a private problem in public. You can make short work of it if you face up to it honestly.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)
Your energy is primed for a good time. Take a friend or go alone – either way, you are destined for fun.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
Try to do something daring. A simple act can make a big difference and help you to see your next path.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
Your idealistic side is out in force. Someone needs to know what you think, so make sure he hears it.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
Someone is trying to sell you an investment plan. Scratch the surface to see what is going on.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Try not to worry too much when things start to get weird – most of it should work out for the best.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
Things are looking up for you, but you need to make sure that you are staying on track.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
You are certain that things are going your way, but make sure that the details are correct.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)
Though your boss disagrees with you, you need to go ahead with your plan. You can get your way later.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Weekdays With Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Weekdays With Charmaine Yee
4.00 On The Drive Home With Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 Glenn & The Flying Dutchman
10.00 The Midday Brew With Charmaine Phua
PM
1.00 Afternoon Tune Up With Cheryl Miles
4.00 The Weekday Getaway With Divian Nair
8.00 Love Songs With Simon Lim

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker & Finance Presenter Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.16am/7.21pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 12.31am/12.51pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 3.31am (2.8m), 10.05am (0.8m), 4.30pm (2.4m), 10.11pm (1.4m). Desaru: 3.07am (2.5m), 9.35am (1.1m), 4.18pm (2.5m), 10.07pm (1.7m). Port Dickson: 5.48am (0.7m), 11.12am (1.9m), 5.14pm (0.5m), 11.37pm (2.1m). Mersing: 2.28am (2.6m), 9.13am (1.1m), 4.08pm (2.7m), 9.58pm (1.9m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 4.11am (2.6m), 11.09am (0.9m), 5.54pm (2.2m), 10.56pm (1.6m). Desaru: 3.45am (2.4m), 10.41am (1.1m), 5.46pm (2.3m), 11.28pm (1.9m). Port Dickson: 6.33am (0.9m), 11.58am (1.7m), 5.59pm (0.7m). Mersing: 2.59am (2.4m), 10.02am (1.1m), 5.33pm (2.7m), 11.41pm (2.1m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

A seventh Swift album to come?

NEW YORK • Look what the Look What You Made Me Do singer – Taylor Swift – has inspired her fans to do.

They have come up with multiple theories to clue others in on why the superstar had posted a photo – featuring seven palm trees – online.

Swift had captioned the picture, which also showed a turquoise starry sky, in an enigmatic way, with only seven tree emojis.

That was not a mind-twister for her many fans who, to a person, said it was all too obvious what the photo, which was posted on Sunday and had since drawn more than 800,000 likes, really pointed to.

Because there are seven tree emojis, the consensus is that a seventh album is on the way from Swift, 29.

One astute fan wrote: "So if there are 60 stars as some have said, let's say there are about 60/61. There are 61 days until April 26, Friday, a single release day! Another connection – April 26 is Arbor Day, a connection to palm trees?"

Arbor Day is marked by a call to people to plant trees.

Another sharp observer said: "Okay so in this picture there are four palm trees on the left (four country albums). There are two palm trees on the right (two pop albums). There is one large palm tree in the middle.

"This represents her new album. It's gonna be a different genre than anything she's ever done."

Yet another fan spotted that the photo was the seventh the pop star had posted to Instagram this year.

Last year, Taylor, whose last studio album, Reputation, was released in 2017, had also sent her fans speculating about a new album, with a photo posted in October.

On tour in Australia then, the picture showed her playing Scrabble with her mum.

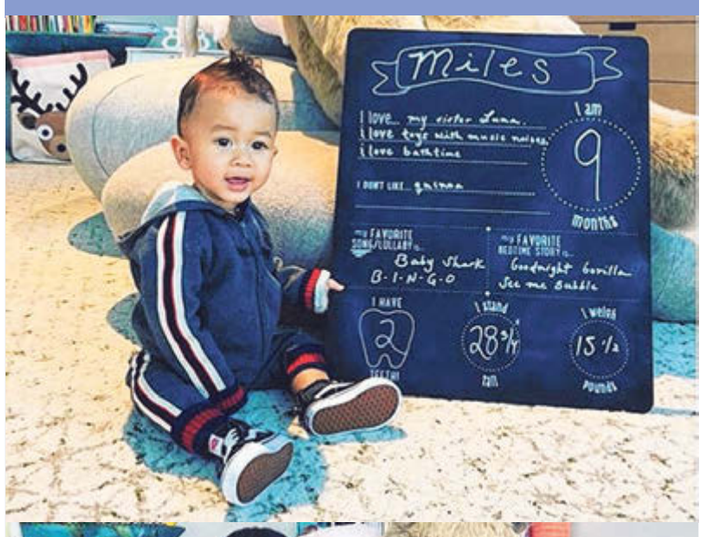
The caption said teasingly: "Let the games begin."

Fans, noting the tiles – B, I, O, I and E – that she possessed, did their mathematics.

Knowing that the letter B is worth three points in the game and each vowel earns just one point, they toted up the tally and came up with seven.

Taylor Swift posted a photo of seven palm trees online, which led to speculation that the singer is about to release her seventh album. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, TAYLOR SWIFT/INSTAGRAM

On social media



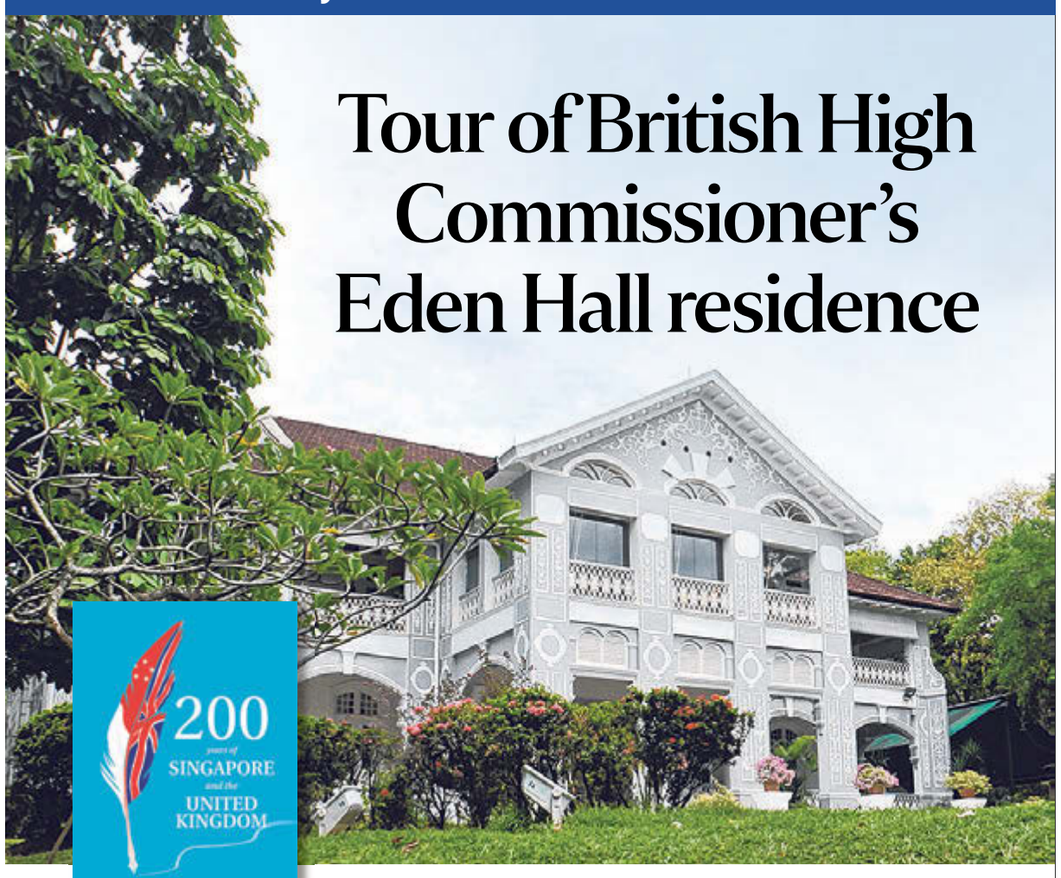
CHRISSIE TEIGEN'S MEN MARK MILESTONES: Supermodel Chrissie Teigen, 33, marked the development of her nine-month-old son, Miles, with a photo that showed him with a chalkboard that listed details such as his love for his sister Luna Simone who is 2½ years old.

He also likes "toys with music noises" and "bath time" while he hates quinoa, never mind if it is a fashionable food for many millennials.

Legend, not wanting to be left out of the fun, also posed like Miles, with the photo shared online the next day. Besides noting that he is 482 months old, his chalkboard mentions that he loves "my family", but is turned off by two things – beets and bad grammar.

"Wow they grow up so fast," Teigen could not resist having a dig at her husband in the caption. PHOTOS: CHRISSIE TEIGEN/INSTAGRAM

Exclusively for subscribers of The Straits Times



Tour of British High Commissioner's Eden Hall residence

ST subscribers will get to tour Eden Hall, the residence of the British High Commissioner to Singapore Scott Wightman, on March 23 as part of Trafalgar's exclusive Be My Guest event.

There will also be a special reading by Mr Wightman from the book, 200 Years Of Singapore And The United Kingdom, co-edited by him and Professor Tommy Koh, followed by a presentation on the sustainable ways of travel in Britain.

The Be My Guest programme takes travellers on guided holidays to Europe and Britain and connects them with the locals.

How to win places for Be My Guest at Eden Hall on March 23, 10am

1. Download the SPH Rewards app.
2. Look out for the giveaway in the Rewards section.
3. Save the deal to your e-wallet.
4. Press the JOIN button on the top right and complete the sentence in no more than 100 words: **I want to visit Eden Hall to find out more about the Singapore-UK bicentennial ties because...**

There are 20 pairs of passes to be won. Contest ends on March 8. Terms and conditions apply.

sph rewards

ST news with benefits

THE STRAITS TIMES WE'VE GOT SINGAPORE COVERED

Subscribe now at stsub.sg or call 6388-3838

Star of My 600-lb Life dies at age 29

LOS ANGELES • A former contestant of an American reality TV show, who shed more than 180kg of weight, has died at age 29.

Mr Sean Milliken, who starred in My 600-lb Life, died on Feb 17.

Gossip portal TMZ reported that he succumbed to complications from an infection.

"(On) Sunday, he was having problems with his breathing, they were able to resuscitate him and a short time later his heart stopped," his father Matt Milliken said.

People magazine reported that Mr Sean Milliken weighed as much as 408kg and was on the show for only one episode in 2016.

Other media sources noted that he had stated in the episode that he knew he would not make it past his 30th birthday.

He lost more than 180kg over the course of his weight-loss journey, said TLC, a television network that airs My 600-lb Life.

He became bedridden during his senior year of high school , after suffering a debilitating leg injury, People noted.

Mr Milliken said in the 2016 episode that he turned to food at a young age to cope with his tumultuous relationship with his father.

"It was scary. So I would eat. And suddenly I felt a lot better.

"In that moment, nothing else mattered," he added.

Mr Sean Milliken, 29, who starred in one episode of My 600-lb Life, said he knew he would not make it past his 30th birthday. PHOTO: TLC/FACEBOOK

Singer R. Kelly has no money to post bail

NEW YORK • Singer R. Kelly remained in detention over sexual abuse charges on Sunday, his lawyer said, having still not posted bail.

A Chicago judge set bail at US$1 million (S$1.35 million) at a hearing on Saturday – of which 10 per cent needed to be paid, in this case US$100,000.

But local media reported that Kelly had failed to do so and remained in detention.

Kelly had already spent two nights in detention.

Mr Steve Greenberg, Kelly's lawyer, said his client was not as rich as his fame would suggest.

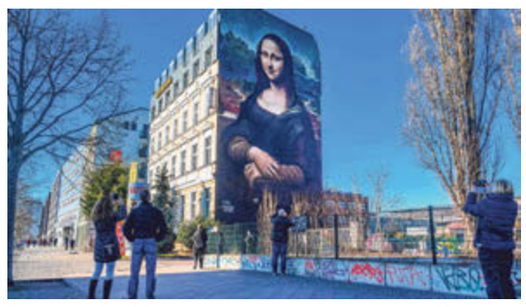
"This is someone who should be wealthy at this stage of his career, and through mismanagement, through hangers-on and bad contracts and bad deals and bad leases like he had with his studio, he really doesn't have any money at this point," he noted.

Kelly, 52, was jailed on Friday on charges of sexually abusing four victims, including three minors, between 1998 and 2010.

He also had to surrender his passport and was told not to have contact with any of his accusers or anyone under the age of 18.

"We're happy to turn in his passport," said Mr Greenberg. Alluding to the 1998 song that made Kelly a superstar, I Believe I Can Fly, the lawyer added: "Contrary to the song, Mr Kelly doesn't like to fly."

NYTIMES, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



The portrait of Mona Lisa, measuring more than 16m high and 11m wide, was painted on a hotel wall in Berlin. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Giant replica of Mona Lisa created

BERLIN • Folk living in German capital Berlin had plenty to smile over the weekend.

The enigmatic smile of Mona Lisa became a big draw in the city after local artists created an enormous version of Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece.

The portrait – more than 16m high and 11m wide – was painted on a hotel wall facing another iconic artwork: the East Side Gallery, a series of murals painted on remnants of the Berlin Wall that once divided the city before reunification.

But the world's most famous painting had to be given a rapid facelift on Saturday morning after the first version of the image gave Mona Lisa the appearance of sucking a sweet, reported news agency Deutsche Presse-Agentur.

Elsewhere, the Renaissance masterpiece has also inspired residents in Saitama prefecture in Japan to come up with a replica that used about 24,000 rice crackers.

In Canada, a video of a man recreating the legendary image on an ice rink has gone viral.

Published and printed by Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Co. Regn. No. 198402868E.

A member of Audit Bureau of Circulations Singapore. Customer Service (Circulation): 6388-3838, circs@sph.com.sg, Fax 6746-1925.